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THE

MAN OF FORTUNE,

AND

OTHER TALES.

BY MRS GORE,

AUTHORESS OF 'MRS ARMITAGE,' 'STOKESHILL PLACE,' ETC.

Gore, Grace Frances (Mood)

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE WIFE OF AN ARISTOCRAT.

THE Chateau d'Armentières is one of the few country houses in France which can pretend to rivalship with the rural residences of Great Britain. The finest of our English parks is but a favoured "bit" of nature; an enwalled or enfenced portion of landscape, trained by the hand of art to resemble the more picturesque districts of the island. In France, on the contrary, the pleasure grounds of a country seat are not only artificial, but aim at distinguishing themselves from the common-place of nature.—The lily must be painted—the violet perfumed. Plants are marshalled as in the ranks of a regiment;—forest trees trimmed and trained

as for the bandbox of an artificial florist. The garden contains as much marble or granite, as shrubs or soil. Ballustrades of stone replace the fragrant fence of sweetbriar; and the stately vase, upon its pedestal, usurps in the shrubbery the place of the gum-cistus or rhododendron. The French, regarding this ornate artificiality as an evidence of cost and care, will not believe that English people allow the lime-trees on their lawns to extend untrimmed their luxuriant branches, from any other motive than an economy of labour.

At Armentières things are no better ordered than elsewhere. — The mansion is surrounded by the usual intersections of rectangular sanded walks, and box-edged parterres; a terrace overlooking a muddy canal; a few stone basins full of grass-green Tritons and Nereids, each capable of throwing up a fountain, were the leaden pipes less full of chinks, or the stagnant water in which they are dabbling less full of tadpoles; a grove of chesnut trees, whose tall, straight stems stand formally arranged, like the pipes of an organ; and a wilderness of weeds and cinque-foil beyond, which passes under the

honorary denomination of park. Such are the features of Armentières. Yet, on the whole, it is a beautiful residence; for the pleasure grounds are fortunately small, and nature has done wonders for the environs of a place where art exhibits only those fantastic tricks which, instead of playing before high Heaven, she would do well to restrict to the decorations of an opera house. Below the limits of the hard, stiff gardens, lies a deep and richly wooded ravine, with a brook leaping along the bottom; and beyond the opposite bank extends a heathy forest, intersected with hoary masses of rock;—one portion thickly grown with the noblest timber, another partially cleared, and rendered picturesque by its patches of silver birch trees, Spanish chesnuts, and straggling juniper. Situated on the confines of the estates of the house of Bourbon-Condé, you may ride ten miles from Armentières to the Palace of Chantilly, through a succession of forest scenery worthy some Tuscan romance, or the pages of Hobbima.

Léon d'Armentières, who, at the epoch of the restoration of the Bourbons to the throne of France, occupied the Chateau and its depen-

dencies, was a fine, open-spirited young man of four-and-twenty, born amid the terrors of the Revolution, and apparently foredoomed to suffer the penalty of noble birth by a life of penury and privation. But on the accession of Napoleon, a grateful recollection on the part of the new Emperor of some trifling service rendered him in his earlier days by the Baron d'Armentières, produced an unexpected change in the fortunes of the family. They were sought out in their obscure retreat, and loaded with the favours of government. The Baron soon obtained means of redeeming his confiscated estates, and nothing but his untimely death on the field of Austerlitz, prevented him from rising to the highest honours of the state. Within a few months of the fatal event, the Baroness fell a victim to affliction, bequeathing their only son to the guardianship of the Emperor. Léon d'Armentières — enrolled among the pages of the Imperial household, mechanically adopted the views, sentiments, and principles, with which gratitude had inspired his parents. Many of the most illustrious houses in France—Montesquieus, Narbonnes, Breteuils, were already,

indeed, in service at the Tuileries; and, but that Léon had flattered himself he should be honoured, on attaining the fitting age, with a military appointment, he might have congratulated himself on his good fortune, when, on entering his eighteenth year, the Emperor selected him as equerry to the newly-born King of Rome.

It was rumoured in the Imperial circle, that the Baroness d'Armentières, whose early death was produced by the loss of her husband on the field of battle, had personally implored the Emperor to spare her only son from the fatal ranks of his army. But Léon himself cherished an embittering suspicion that the great soldier did not judge him worthy to serve under his banners; and a disgust against the splendid servitude in which he was enlisted, took possession of his bosom.

For some years past, indeed, the chief pleasure of Léon's life had consisted in such visits to the Chateau d'Armentières as his duties at the Tuileries would permit,—the Chateau where he was born, and which he had inhabited for several years of his existence. To *him* every tree of the domain was familiar, every hill a friendly object.

The verdure of Fontainebleau or Compiègne never appeared, in *his* eyes, to rival that of his own fine woods. Nowhere was the climate so wholesome—nowhere the field sports so exhilarating. *There* he was an object of universal interest; the very woodcutters could date the day and the hour of his birth!—nay! the blind beggar, stationed by the villagers to warm himself in the sunshine safe within the gates of the avenue, appeared to have an instinctive knowledge that his approaching footstep was that of the young Baron d'Armentières.

The place had been but roughly kept up during Léon's minority. The shutters of the grand suite of apartments remained closed, except when, once a year or so, it became necessary to remove the mildew from the pictures and tapestry, and ascertain how far moth and rust had corrupted during the preceding twelvemonth. The avenue and court of honour were obstructed by trunks of trees lying seasoning in the sun, preparatory to being chopped up for firewood; and, as to the gardens, they were almost as luxuriant and beautiful as if there existed neither a gardener nor a pruning-hook in France. But all this

disorder afforded an agreeable change to Léon after the precise precincts of the court; and he loved the very weeds of the flower-borders, because they seemed to flourish of their own accord.

"Were I my own master," cried Léon, every time he passed the gate of the Chateau on his way back to his official duties, "I would never quit Armentières."

"You fancy so, because 'tis almost the only thing you are not at liberty to do," observed his bosom friend, Count Philip de Breteuil, one day, when, on his return from a sporting September week of holidays, Léon indulged in his usual declaration.

"Partiality to one's birth-place, methinks, is no very uncommon failing," said he, moderating his indignation, as he leaned back in the embrasure of a window in an ante-chamber of the palace at St Cloud, where Breteuil and himself were officiating in the duties of their appointments.

"Granted! for what is it but one of the thousand-and-one modifications of human self-sufficiency?"

"Well, then—egotism apart—surely there is

nothing objectionable in preferring, for my residence, one of the most beautiful spots in the kingdom?"

"Fontainebleau is one of the most beautiful spots in the kingdom," replied Breteuil, with provoking calmness; "yet you were as much bored there last week, as if you had been camping with some roving tribe in Stony Arabia."

"With or *without* a sufficient reason, then, give me leave to assert that I love the home of my fathers beyond all other places under the canopy of Heaven."

"You love the home of your father's son, I fancy," replied Breteuil, playing with his sword knot. "You find yourself a little king in your little chateau. We all like to sovereignize when and where we are able."

"To prove how completely you mistake my motives, know that my present partiality for Armentières is trifling, compared with the love I bore the place on quitting it, at ten years old; when I and Margaret used to wander through the woods in springtime, making garlands of wild anemones and lilies of the valley."—

"And who is Margaret?—Your sister?"—

"I am an only child. Margaret was a little girl nursed and reared by the porter's wife."

"A pretty playmate, truly, for the young Chatelain!—What might be her name?"

"The young Chatelain never inquired. She was always 'Margaret' to *me*, unless, indeed, when I called her my little wife."

"And what do you call her *now*?"—

"I have heard nothing of her these ten years past. Margaret was taken home from her foster-mother about the period I entered the Tuileries; and, by this, she is probably the portly wife of some grocer of the Rue St Denis."

"I wonder you never sought her out, that for once, you might insure becoming sympathy in your passion for the old oak trees of Armentières!" said Breteuil, with a sneer. "But, *àpropos* to love and matrimony, I have news for you! Whom, think you, is going to be noosed in the silken chain?"

"If I am to guess the least likely man in Paris, allow me to name yourself!"

"Right!—for once you have hit the mark."

"How!" cried Léon, who had intended a mere

pleasantry; "*you*, my dear Count, are *really* going to be married?"—

"So the Emperor informs me, and he is apt to be correct on such points."

"And to whom?"

"To a Mademoiselle Gallien, or Galiand, or some such person."

"The proposition, then, did not spring from yourself—the lady is not of your own selection?"

"No!—I asked the Emperor for the means of paying my debts; and he was not only so liberal as to afford them, but to throw me a wife into the bargain. He bestows upon me the only child of a *receveur-général*, and an aid-de-campship. The marriage contract is to be signed to-night; to-morrow the marriage will be solemnized at St Roch; and, if the Emperor deigns to listen to my next request as graciously as to the last, I shall set off on the following day, to accompany him to Russia."

"Mademoiselle *Gallien or Galiand* is much indebted to your gallantry," said Léon. "But don't you invite me to your wedding?"

"The Emperor further informs me you are to be my bridesman. So be ready to accompany me,

at seven this evening, to the Rue de Grenelle, when I am to be presented to my bride; in order to present her with a few thousand livres' worth of diamonds, as marriage gifts, at the expense of their Imperial Majesties."

Even trained as Léon had been in the heartlessness of a court, there was something in the cool insensibility of Breteuil that excited his disgust. He attired himself for the ceremonial of the evening with an involuntary feeling of compassion towards the unfortunate girl about to be sacrificed in order to repair the disorders of a libertine; and turned a deaf ear to the piquant sallies of the bridegroom, as they ascended the grand staircase of a fine hotel in the Faubourg St Germain. The names of "Messieurs the Count Philippe de Breteuil and the Baron Léon d'Armentières," were loudly announced by a succession of domestics; and Monsieur "Gallien or Galiand," with whom Breteuil had already had repeated interviews at the house of his man of business, advanced to the very door of the ante-chamber to welcome his noble son-in-law. Léon cast a mistrustful glance upon the countenance of the old financier, who, it was clear, had made a mere

bargain of his daughter; for Galiand was to become Monsieur le Baron when his child became Madame la Comtesse. The rich upstart was to be ennobled — the impoverished peer enriched; all which formed part of Napoleon's favourite system of "fusion."

"It is to be hoped, for Breteuil's sake, that the young lady may possess a more prepossessing face than her father," thought Léon, as they followed the pompous guidance of his host through a suite of sumptuous chambers; in the furthest of which, stood a writing table surrounded by lawyers, and a lovely young woman, attired in bridal white, surrounded by a posse of female relatives. Nothing more noble or more graceful than the air with which she returned the salutations, and accepted the bouquet almost contemptuously offered to her by Breteuil; and even the latter was struck by the beauty of her person, and quiet dignity of her demeanour. At her father's suggestion, the contents of the marriage articles were now hastily run over by the notary; and, with the exception of a start from Léon on hearing the name of the bride recited as "Marie Marguerite Galiand," no one gave evidence of having listened to a

syllable. The ladies present were occupied in admiring the rich lace of which Mary Margaret's dress was composed; and the men, the dauntless audacity with which the aristocratic bridegroom supported the ignominious publicity of his pauperism.

The notary bowed his head at the conclusion of the last page, in token that his task was over; on which the Count offered his hand to the lady (through whom he found himself endowed with half a million lawful monies of the realm), to lead her to the table whereon the parchments were extended. The pen was placed in her hand; and while, below the hurried signature it served to trace, all the illustrious personages present were inscribing their names as witnesses of the covenant, Breteuil took the opportunity to present, to the notice of Mademoiselle, his friend and bridesman, the Baron Léon d'Armentières. The young Baron advanced, at the summons of Breteuil, to offer the customary compliments. But, as their eyes met, the ejaculation of "Margaret" on one side, and "Léon" on the other, cut short all form of speech; and it was with some difficulty that the Count gleaned, from their hur-

ried explanations, that he was about to lead to the altar the little wife of his young friend. Yes! the future Madame la Comtesse Philippe de Breteuil had actually been ushered into life as the nursling of the porter's wife of the Chateau d'Armentières!

Old Galiand was, in fact, one of those mysterious nobodies whose fortune became magnified with such incredible rapidity in the commissariat department of the army in Spain. His means had been as humble as his origin, even so lately as the period when the death of his young wife, in childbed, left a motherless girl upon his hands. Yet scarcely had Margaret attained her tenth year, when his enormous wealth made it incumbent on him to remove his future heiress from her obscure retreat, to be trained into finished courtliness by the experienced hands of Madame Campan. The rumour of her prospects and merits now reached the ear of the Emperor; and determined him to render her hand a prize for one of his indigent adherents. That the delicacy of Mademoiselle Galiand could be wounded by this summary mode of disposing of her destinies, never entered into his high and mighty calculations!—

"And thus, my dear Léon, the fates have been

playing at cross-purposes with our fortunes," observed Breteuil to his young friend, as they retired together, at an early hour that night, in order to be in readiness for the solemnity of the morrow. "'Tis a pity but I had earlier discovered your pre-engagement with my betrothed; for it is probable that the Emperor might have patched up *your* affairs with her dowry as readily as mine; while, to *myself*, it would of course have been a matter of indifference to be indebted for the indemnization of my creditors to some other grocer's daughter or chandler's widow."

"Margaret is neither the daughter of a grocer nor the widow of a chandler, that I am aware of," replied Léon, in a tone at least as bitter as the irony of his companion; "and *my* affairs, thank Heaven, stand in no need of patching. The Chateau d'Armentières——"

"The Chateau d'Armentières!—Still and always the Chateau d'Armentières!"—sneered Breteuil, who had been irritated not a little by discovering, in the course of the evening, that Mademoiselle Galiand, so far from being touched by his lofty homage, was wholly engrossed by the renewal of her acquaintance with his young bridesman.

"Surely we have heard enough of the Chateau d'Armentières to-night, to last us for some time to come. Margaret and yourself seem to yearn grievously after the porter's lodge, in which she received her education !—

'A tous les cœurs bien nés, que la patrie est chère.'"

Léon forbore to reply. He was ruminating whether it might not still be possible to rescue his dear little Margaret from the arms of the callous libertine by whom she was predestined to contempt and neglect. But his cogitations proved infructuous. On the following morning, the Archbishop of Paris united the unloving couple. On the following night, the Count and Countess de Breteuil took possession of the apartments allotted them in the Palace of the Tuileries. And, on the following month, the bride became once more the inmate of her father's beautiful villa in the valley of Montmorency ;—Count Philippe de Breteuil, aid-de-camp to his Imperial Majesty, having taken his departure for the grand army.

During the intervening period, d'Armentières had found no occasion for the renewal of his intimacy with Madame de Breteuil. The whole court rang with praises of her beauty, and admiration

of the dignity of her demeanour; yet the Count omitted no opportunity of observing to Léon, whenever chance threw them into a *tête-à-tête*— "I cannot forgive you, my dear Baron, for having neglected to inspire poor Margaret with some insight into men and things, as they exist in the every-day world, instead of losing your time pulling posies in the woods of Armentières. It is *your* fault, rather than mine, that my wife makes her first appearance at court with the air and manners of a kitchen-maid. Thank heaven, she has consented to pass the time of my absence in retirement with her father and his low associates. To *me*, it would be worse than death from the lance of a Don Cossack, to know that the creature was disgracing me by exposing her *gaucheries* to all the *parvenue* Duchesses of Bonaparte's mushroom circle!"—

Léon was not sufficiently a man of the world to reply, as Breteuil had expected, to this attack upon his wife; and when the Emperor and his suite quitted Paris, the young man judged it better to dismiss from his mind the unsatisfactory renewal of his acquaintance with the "Margaret" of his early years.

There was one spot, however, in which Margaret was not to be forgotten. The first visit paid by the Baron to the home of his infancy insensibly reconjured before him the image of his little playfellow, contrasted with that of the beautiful woman, radiant with jewels and brocade, whom he had seen presented at court as the Countess de Breteuil. "I loved her best in her little stuff frock and cotton apron," thought he, many months after her marriage, as he pursued his way along the ravine by the side of the brook where they had been accustomed to gather and crown each other with water-flowers and rushes. "But no one can dispute the loveliness of Madame de Breteuil."

It did not surprise him to learn from Guillot, the porter, that, in the course of the summer, a beautiful lady, from the valley of Montmorency, had visited Armentières; passing the day in wandering through the environs, and conferring happiness on the inhabitants of the whole district, by the extent of her benefactions.

"You should have seen her sitting with my old woman up at the lodge, Monsieur le Baron!" said old Guillot—"arranging in our press the

stock of linen with which she came provided; and looking over our stock of furniture, to discover of what we stood in need; and sure enough, a few days afterwards, Pierre the waggoner left at our door, for our use, a bed and buffet, such as would do honour to any room in the Chateau d'Armentières!"

"And did you not manage to learn the name of your strange benefactress?" inquired Léon.

"The *title*—not the name," answered Guillot. "I found out that the beautiful lady was a countess, whose husband is absent with the army; which is no doubt the cause of her unhappiness, poor young creature!—For the tears stood in her eyes all the time she sat talking to my old woman; and more than once, they rolled down her cheeks, and I thought she was going to speak freely, and give loose to her feelings. But the old gentleman who accompanied her (her father, I believe—in spite of his age and infirmities, so cold, and so stiff, and so proud of the ribbon at his button-hole!) bad her recollect herself, or recollect her promise, or something of the sort. And then she dried up her tears, and began to talk of *you*, sir; *not* as most visitors here talk of

you—to inquire how many horses you have in your stable, or how many wild boars you sent home last hunting season;—but whether you were a kind master to your people, and a good landlord to the poor."

"You gave me a tolerable character, I trust, to so pretty a lady?" inquired Léon, trying to smile.

"I rather think not, sir. The moment your name was mentioned, my old woman, as usual, began to sob and whimper; and to talk over the days when you lived at the Chateau with your tutor, and little Margaret was at nurse with us, and you used to play together. And when my old woman gets upon the chapter of Margaret, as your Excellency is well aware, she never knows where to stop; and up came all the old tales, story by story, of how you were lost together in ——"

"And what said the Countess?" demanded Léon, to spare himself the well-known tale.

"Oh! the Countess had nothing better to do than to sit and cry for company. She even took the poor withered hand of my old dame between her two fair hands, and carried it to her heart

and her lips, as if to comfort her. And, seeing that, sir, the old Baron bad her not make a fool of herself; and went and ordered round the carriage to the gate, and got her off and away."

"And pray, my good Guillot, what became of that said little Margaret, the nurse-child, whom you and your wife remember with so much affection?"—inquired d'Armentières.

"She died young, sir. When we sent to ask news of the girl of her aunt (the rich mercer's wife who placed her here), soon after she was removed from our care, we were informed that it was all over with poor Margaret. I should not wonder but her death was caused, poor child, by fretting after us and you, Monsieur le Baron. For Margaret loved you dearly, sir. Margaret would start up from her play, if she caught a glimpse of you at half a league's distance, yonder across the brook, and off, like a fawn, to try to catch you. Oftentimes she has gone without her dinner, watching for you down by the river side, when she expected you home from fishing. Yes, Monsieur Léon, Margaret loved you very, *very* dearly."

"And did this beautiful lady from Montmorency make no promise of returning?" inquired the Baron, unwilling that Guillot should perceive how much he was affected by these assurances.

"No, sir,—no *promise*. She inquired, indeed, when you were likely to visit the Chateau, and I told her not till September. For we did not expect you, sir, before the crops were down, and the harvest fairly over. And she said in *that* case, perhaps she might come again. 'Twas in vain my old woman and I assured her that, any way, she might come, and take her walk in the gardens, all as one as if you were away; that, by being careful to keep out of your way, she need be nowise a hindrance to you, nor *you* to *her*. She answered something about intrusion; and, as September is near at hand without sign or token of her return, I fear she will come no more."

She came, however, ere Léon had been many days established at the Chateau. He had the happiness, as he sat meditating in one of the shady avenues of the gardens, to discern, at a distance, between the decrepit figures of Guillot

and his wife, the graceful person of the Countess de Breteuil. For a moment, he was uncertain whether to advance and address her, or leave her in ignorance of his presence at the Chateau. He was convinced that Margaret would not have been there, had she known of his arrival at Armentières. But to *feel* her presence—*there*, in his favourite spot—*there*, in the beautiful haunt of his early years—yet make no sign, was impossible. Careful only to avoid compromising the mystery which Margaret seemed forced by her father to maintain towards her foster-parents, he hastened to welcome the gentle stranger within his gates, with all the honours of deferential hospitality.

Madame de Breteuil was startled and apparently vexed by the predicament in which she had placed herself. But Baron Galiand, to whom Léon was already known as the friend of his son-in-law, willingly accepted the courtesies of so distinguished a member of the Imperial household. Pleading the privilege of his age, he even begged to be left to his siesta, after the excellent collation and choice Bourdeaux set before him; and then it was that Léon and Margaret, sauntering out

once more into the sunny gardens, sat down together, as of old, in a shady nook, and poured out their hearts to each other in talking of the past, and concealed them altogether as studiously while talking of the present or surmising of the future!

Yet Léon fancied he could discern, from the scornful smile that involuntarily curved the beautiful lip of Margaret when she alluded to herself, she had discovered the falseness of her position, and the hollowness of her new dignities; that she felt her beauty, her youth, her talents, her high-mindedness, to be thrown away on one who affected to support their union, as a penance for his former prodigality.

She spoke of the court as a place she had visited in bitterness and loathing, and would willingly renounce; and, though she carefully abstained from breathing the name of Philippe de Breteuil, her whole deportment testified to the sensitive Léon that she appreciated the worldling as he deserved.

"This is the happiest morning I have spent for years!" cried D'Armentières, reluctantly withdrawing his eyes from her animated face, when, at

length, she pointed out to him that the golden light of evening was brightening around them, and that the even song of the thrush gave the signal for her departure. "Surely you will come again—or have I your permission to offer you my homage at Montmorency?" said he.

"My father will probably invite you to visit us," she replied; "but let me forestall the request by reminding you that my position is a peculiar one; and assuring you that you will confer a favour on me by declining the proposal."

Léon did not remonstrate. The serene composure of Margaret's manner convinced him she was in earnest.

Léon d'Armentières was soon at his post again, involved anew in the vortex of the court. But how much wider a portion did the Chateau now claim in his thoughts, connected as it was with the fairest form on which he had ever looked—with the sweetest image that had ever haunted his fancy! He thought only of "Margaret." Of the Countess Philippe de Breteuil, whose beauty was a proverbial word at court, he strove to banish the idea. He wished to disencumber the recollection of "Margaret" of that

which rendered it painful or pernicious. Something in her dignity of manner and sentiment, overawed every libertine project.

How manifest was her superiority to all around her! Her vain ambitious father, hungering after ribbons and titles; — her heartless, interested husband, ready to sell his hand and name for thirty pieces of silver; — the courtly minions, her new associates — all, all, were infinitely beneath her standard of excellence; nor dared he presume to bring his own merits into comparison with hers.—He felt that he must rest satisfied with the place in her affections secured by early associations.—A fatal abyss was interposed between them.

Ere the close of the year, however, and while the vivid impressions made upon his mind at his last visit to Armentières retained their fullest force, rumours which grievously concerned the peace of Madame de Breteuil reached the ear of Armentières. Old Galiand, still connected with the house of business through whose prosperity he had risen to distinction, became involved in a bankruptcy created by the already failing fortunes of Napoleon. Reduced to penury, his daughter's

fortune dissipated to fulfil the engagements of her husband, the old man was driven to the necessity of relinquishing the society of the child for whom he was no longer able to secure a home; and it was supposed at the Tuileries that Madame de Breteuil would derive her future subsistence from some trifling appointment in the household of Maria Louisa.

"Poor Margaret!"—was Léon's involuntary ejaculation, as he recalled to mind her expressions of disgust at even the remote prospect of such a destiny. "Margaret a prisoner at the Tuileries —Margaret obliged to submit to the hollow formalities of this heartless place—Margaret compelled to be grateful for the bitter bread of servitude!"—

He did not even pause to remember that *now* he should daily behold her—that now he should enjoy unintermitting intercourse with his friend. He recollected only that Margaret would be humiliated—that Margaret would be unhappy; and hastily sat down to make an offer to old Galiand of the Chateau d'Armentières as an asylum for himself and his daughter, at least till the return of the Count de Breteuil should provide

them with a more appropriate residence. "You will do me a favour," he wrote, "by accepting the use and control of my establishment; for, having made up my mind to absent myself from the Chateau for a year to come, and unwilling to dismiss domestics who have been faithful to me and mine, I shall be puzzled how to dispose of them, unless you kindly consent to exercise my authority over my household."

Léon was careful to address his proposals to the old Baron, rather than to Madame de Breteuil; and his expectations that Galiand would be less surprised than flattered by his kindness, were strictly fulfilled. And thus, sorely against her will, Madame de Breteuil found herself compelled to become the inmate of the Chateau d'Armentières, or relinquish the society of her father; for she perhaps had less confidence than the doting Baron, in Léon's professions of a determination to avoid the place. Those professions, nevertheless, were fulfilled to the letter. The young man felt pledged by a solemn promise to Margaret — to Margaret, poor and unprotected—almost as poor, almost as unprotected, as when first he clasped her hand in his, and saluted her by the name of his

little wife!—Such an engagement was not to be lightly regarded by a man of honour.

At length, letters arrived from the army—that army which, for the first time, was experiencing reverses of fortune;—proving that the Count was at once apprized of the ruin of his father-in-law, and of the generous succour afforded him by Léon d'Armentières. "I find," wrote the noble aide-de-camp, "that the inveterate old fool Galiand has pulled the Devil by the tail to some purpose, and gone to the dogs, from whom, I fancy, he originally proceeded. You are vastly obliging, my dear Léon, to have afforded him a kennel. My wife seems to possess the instinct of certain animals, who, when pressed by the hunters, return to die at the place from whence they started. But why do I say *die*, since, from all accounts, Madame de Breteuil is only too likely to survive and enjoy the jointure with which my folly or my necessities compelled me to endow her? Meanwhile, flourish the Chateau d'Armentières!—which needed only to become an almshouse for my poor relations, to acquire all that it wanted of merit in my eyes."

"And he dares to speak of her thus!" exclaimed Léon; "yet I must not offer her my devoted

attachment as a compensation for his insolence! I must not even present myself before her, to soften the harsh expressions Breteuil has dared to use in speaking of her father!"

Short leisure, however, was afforded to the Baron for pondering over the misfortunes of Margaret. Those of France and the Emperor forced themselves with imperative interest upon his attention. The deceptive nature of the bulletins dispatched from the army of the north was at length recognised in Paris; and, ere the credulous people could recover the first shock of their consternation, Napoleon himself arrived suddenly at the Tuileries—defeated—a fugitive; and it was clear, even to the most partial, that Russia was saved, and the military Empire overthrown. One consolation was experienced at that moment by the young equerry of the King of Rome—Philippe de Breteuil did not accompany his master!—The Count remained with the army, for the discharge of duties so dangerous, difficult, and distasteful, that he would have been almost content to exchange for them the society of his wife and father-in-law; and quite content to have beheld the Emperor, his benefactor, roasted in the

Kremlin, or frozen on the plain of Borodino, so that the sacrifice might emancipate his own precious person from its present privations.

The rumour of these national mischances struck a heavy blow at Armentières. A mournful mistrust prevailed in the little household; and one day, as Madame de Breteuil was sitting between her father and foster-mother, her hands folded despairingly on her knees as she listened to the peevish murmurs of the old people, the gallop of a horse was heard to cease suddenly in the courtyard; and Léon, pale with emotion and exhausted with fatigue, stood amongst them. The case was too urgent to admit of deference towards the feelings of its feeble inmates. A fatal truth was to be told, and quickly.

"All is lost!" he exclaimed, in a hoarse voice, leading apart Madame de Breteuil from the rest. "The Allies are everywhere triumphant, and the Prussians within a day's march of Armentières!"

"Within two days' march of Paris!" cried Margaret, losing sight of her own dangers in the humiliation of her country.

"Within a day's march of Armentières—do

you hear me, Margaret?—within a day's march of Armentières!" cried her friend; "and I cannot remain here to defend you. I have hazarded all that is left me—my honour—to secure this brief interview. The Emperor, my father's benefactor and my own, is on the brink of ruin. My place is by his side; my sword should be with him. Margaret, I am come to bid you farewell—and to tell you, ere I rush into this last struggle, that, if I fall, *you* must be my heir." And, taking a parchment from his vest, he placed it in her cold and motionless hands.

Old Guillot, whose ear had caught the announcement of the arrival of the Prussians, now hobbled towards them, to interpose his lamentations and inquiries.—What was to be done? Were they to resist, or submit to be burned, sacked, and pillaged, with Christian fortitude? Or, were they to hang out, as their betters were doing on all sides, the flag of truce—(God save the mark!)—the *drapeau blanc* of the Bourbons?

"Rather with my own hand apply a lighted brand to the foundations of my father's house!" exclaimed his indignant master. But, as Léon spoke, his eye fell upon the noble figure of Mar-

garet, with all its womanly beauties—her large, fair, pensive forehead and thoughtful cheeks rendered still more dazzlingly pale by the contrast of the luxuriant bands of raven hair bound closely round her finely formed head. He fancied that she trembled. He fancied that a slight quivering was perceptible round her lips, while she listened to the repeated ejaculations of the old people :—" the Prussians, the Prussians—the barbarous, brutal Prussians ! "—

Involuntarily, Léon shuddered, and drew a deep breath, as if wanting force to express what next he was about to utter. Then, without withdrawing his eyes from the person of Margaret, he resumed, in a hoarse whisper—" Monsieur Galiand, you have so long been master here that I should be to blame to interfere in this matter. My people, therefore, are at your disposal. Should *the enemy* take Armentières on their line of march, use any precaution you deem necessary to your own safety and that of your daughter. —Margaret," he continued, in a lower tone, " when yesterday I learned that Breteuil had been among the first to throw aside the tricolor, and desert with his regiment, to

the conqueror, I exulted—God forgive me!—for I knew such vileness would but augment your hatred and contempt for your husband. Now, therefore, if I follow his footsteps, and give over my father's house to shame, do not *thou*, at least, despise me. For the sacrifice is wholly for thee;—for thee, Margaret, whom I have loved so dearly—for thee, whom, from this hour, I shall behold no more."

Long before Madame de Breteuil recovered her self-possession sufficiently to offer him a word of gratitude, Armentières had, indeed, disappeared. He had come but to warn and to comfort — he could not stay to defend!—

"What is this?"—muttered old Galiand, picking up the parchment that lay unnoticed at her feet; while Guillot and the gardeners made their preparations, by hastily removing and secreting all articles of value at the Chateau, and, profiting by the instruction of the old man, suspended a prodigious banner, formed of a damask table-cloth, over the grand entrance. "'A deed of bequest to Mary Margaret Countess de Breteuil, of the Chateau d'Armentières!' A very pretty thought on the part of my young friend

at such a moment. But though there is little chance that a rash partisan like Léon will escape so desperate a massacre as must mark the last day's struggle in such a cause as that of France against the world,—still, my dear child, let me beg you not to indulge in any flattering expectations from this will of the Baron. Even should you succeed to the Armentières estates, they are so heavily encumbered by the mortgages contracted by Léon at the time he so nobly became responsible for me to my creditors, that, were the property sold off, you would be but little the gainer."

"When he became responsible for you to your creditors?"—faltered Margaret, in a tone of inquiry.

"Ay, my dear; at such a time as this, there is no use in keeping the secret; though Monsieur le Baron always made it a great point that you should not be taken into our confidence. But it is as well you should know that I might have ended my days in St Pélagie, had it not been for the generosity of Armentières. The engagements in which I found myself involved by the villany of my partners were such, that nothing

short of the promptitude with which our young friend came to my aid could have saved me. The more praiseworthy on his part that he is no capitalist, poor gentleman. Nothing would serve him but he must raise money on his estates to do me service."

"But you will be able to repay him?" inquired Margaret, growing, if possible, paler than before.

"I did think so,—I did hope so. But things have been sinking from bad to worse, and now not a chance remains of the re-establishment of my affairs. To be sure, this will be no surprise to the Baron, for his own are scarcely in better plight; and should he survive the struggle of to-morrow (Margaret hid her face in her hands and groaned aloud) he will probably be compelled, by his mortgagees, to sell the estate of Armentières;—and, in that case, what will become of *us?*"

"What will become of *us?*—what will become of *him!*" was Margaret's ejaculation, when, having escaped from her father and locked herself into her chamber, she sank upon a chair, to muse over the impending horrors of her position,

and arm her courage for the event. The Prussians at hand—her father and herself exposed to their vindictive outrages—her friend about to sacrifice himself for the falling cause! Already, she seemed to hear the uproar of the approaching brigades, riotous with conquest and intemperance. Already she seemed to behold Léon d'Armentières rushing single-handed and alone against the ranks of the enemies of France—overcome by numbers—bleeding—mangled—crushed—dying among heaps of dead. She pressed her convulsed hands upon her ears and eyes, as if to shut out sounds and sights at present wholly ideal. She gasped for breath; vainly struggling against terrors amounting to agony. At that moment, the disgust with which she was accustomed to contemplate the probability of Breteuil's return was forgotten. Margaret would have borne cheerfully with his insults, to have secured the safety of those she loved,—her father, and him who had been the means of preserving her father's grey hairs from sorrow and disgrace.

"Heaven have mercy on me, and grant me strength, for I must not pray for death—I dare not pray for death!"—she exclaimed, in a concen-

trated voice, overpowered by the throbbing of every pulse in her excited frame. "No!—this is no moment for me to die! I must exert myself for the sake of my poor old father. I must rally in his defence, as he would have done in mine, before old age palsied his faculties and powers of action. I must live—I must take patience. Yet a while must I bear and suffer. The time is not come for my release."

That night, no eye was closed at Armentières. The three poor, feeble, aged beings, so insufficient even to their own preservation, trembled with deeper terror when they remembered that Margaret was among them, rather to defend than be defended; and scarcely had the morning dawned, when detachments of peasants from the environs came thronging to the Chateau with tidings that the Prussians were advancing, spreading ruin and desolation on their path. But Margaret was now tranquillized into the calmness of despair. Even when the distant report of the enemy's artillery proclaimed their approach, she did but move her lips in secret prayer; nor stirred—nor broke the silence she had preserved throughout that night of misery. One after

another, harbingers of evil rushed in, announcing new disasters, and the rapid progress of the troops; till at length, when their agony was at the utmost, came one with a countenance radiant with joy, crying aloud that the brigade which had been seen bearing down upon Armentières, had made a sudden diversion to the left of the route, so that, avoiding the Chateau, its line of march lay through the valley of Montmorency. —Yes! the Chateau and its inhabitants were safe!

Loud and reiterated were the thanksgivings of the helpless old people on receiving the welcome intelligence; yet Margaret, smitten with a sad presentiment, found no courage to utter a syllable. The Chateau and its inhabitants were safe; but Breteuil was with the triumphant allies, and Léon, perhaps, with the slain! How were her doubts to be resolved?—When should she obtain further information?

Amid the confusion incident on the march of a conquering army, authentic intelligence was indeed hard to be obtained. Nothing was known with certainty; and all that *was* known appeared fabulous. The investiture of Paris—the abdication of the Emperor,—were such things to be

credited by those who had so long relied on the ascendant star of Napoleon?

Too speedily, however, and too authentically, was it made known to the unhappy Margaret, that her evil auguries were more than fulfilled;—that the young Baron d'Armentières had not only fallen, but fallen a recreant and a traitor! Within a few hours of their last interview, Léon was reported to have been seen at the Prussian head-quarters, was said to have undertaken, on certain conditions, to bring over his detachment; and to have been sacrificed by his men at the moment of attempting to shake their fidelity to the Emperor. To obtain more exact details was impossible. Margaret had not even the comfort of knowing in what spot of earth the head she loved was laid in the dust. His name had already become a word of reproach among his men. They admitted that the body had been stripped for burial, when the advance of the enemy caused their position to be suddenly evacuated: what became of the corse of the renegade, they neither knew nor cared.

"So gallant—so noble—yet to die the death of a traitor!" exclaimed Margaret, as she sat,

many weeks afterwards, resting her heavy head against the trunk of the old lime tree, under whose branches they had so often played of yore, and where they had sat together at her first visit to the Chateau, after her ill-starred marriage. Her heart sickened as she looked upon the summer sky, and felt the lightsome breath of the summer breezes upon her cheek; and remembered that Napoleon was pining in exile and captivity, and his young soldier lying in a dishonoured grave! But, above all, Breteuil was enjoying the fruits of his treachery; and she trembled at the certainty that the letters he had already addressed her must soon be followed by a personal interview, indispensable to determine the relative position they were in future to maintain towards each other. For she had no longer a right to heap upon him the scorn earned by his treachery, now that Léon—her friend, her brother—had gone and done likewise. She dreaded the arrival of the Count more, in fact, from the fear that he might insult the memory of the unfortunate d'Armentières, than from any personal apprehension of either his love or hatred. Breteuil

had already expressed his wish for a legal separation; and, but for the necessities of her father, Margaret would have acceded to his proposal without a single condition. But what was to become of the decrepit and destitute old man, now that his benefactor was in the dust?—From that epoch of terror, when the arrival of the Prussian troops had been hourly expected, Baron Galiand had been in a state of childishness; and now that the legal term approached for removing the seals placed by the authorities of the district on the property of Armentières, on receiving an official announcement of Léon's decease, it became necessary to provide some asylum for the invalid.

Twice did Margaret humiliate herself so far as to address to her husband a representation of the difficulties of her position, and an entreaty for his commands. Breteuil was still silent; and, on the day when the heirs-at-law were to arrive at the Chateau, to sanction with their presence the formalities of the law, Galiand and his daughter took refuge from general observation in a miserable cottage, situated on the verge of the forest, which had been sacked and

partly destroyed by a skirmishing party at the passage of the allied troops. It was settled that they were to return at nightfall, and take up their temporary residence with Guillot and his wife; but, long before night, long before even noon, the old porter bustled his way to the hovel in quest of his beloved nursling. Strange tidings awaited her. In examining the valuables hastily moved from their secreting place, and amassed together, to be sealed up by the Juge de Paix, one of the first objects discovered was the will confided by Léon to the unheeding charge of Margaret at their last cruel interview; by virtue of which Madame de Breteuil became sole inheritor of the estates of Armentières!

"If the old gentleman yonder had been himself," cried Guillot, pointing to Galiand, who sat with drivelling lip and lustreless eye, unconscious of all that was passing around him, "*he* would not have lost sight of the precious document as you, my poor dear child, seem to have done. To be sure we have had trouble enough, since that black morning, to drive everything from our heads. But if you had only given me a hint that the

Baron had made over to you the whole of his property——"

"*Did* he make over to me the whole of his property?" demanded Margaret, with a bewildered air. "True—I remember now! It was on perusing that will, my father first acquainted me with the extent of our obligations to Léon;—it was in perusing that will, I experienced a presentiment that we had parted for ever. But from that hour to this, the noble bequest of Léon has never crossed my mind."

"In the confusion of the moment, the old Baron must have placed the parchment, for security, among the other family archives," said Guillot; "and thus, Heaven be thanked, it has come to light."

After the momentary exultation consequent on finding herself preserved from want, and able to secure to her father's old age an asylum for which she was again indebted to the generosity of her only friend, Margaret half regretted the discovery of the will. First, came the murmurs and reproaches of the surviving relatives of Léon; next, the conciliatory advances of her husband.

It appears that Breteuil, though largely benefited by the fruits of his treason, found both places and pensions insufficient for the maintenance of his prodigal libertinism; and no sooner were the Countess's claims fully established, than he made his appearance at the Chateau—prepared, since conciliation had proved unavailing,—to go all lengths in the exercise of his authority.

"Your friend the Baron (for *friend*, I suppose, I must in courtesy continue to call him) seems, madam, to have very imperfectly studied your interests," observed he, with the coolest contempt; "since his disposal of the Armentières estates was executed in ignorance that, by his form of conveyance, the husband of his mistress, and not herself, is entitled to their enjoyment."

"My friend, the Baron, probably considered," replied Margaret, without deigning to notice the implied insult, "that a virtual separation having taken place between us, Count Philippe de Breteuil would scorn to participate in a bequest of so peculiar a nature."

"He must have thought me, then, a greater ass than the sequel will prove!"— cried Breteuil, with a forced laugh. "My marriage has been too

bitter a pill for me to dispense with the gilding now afforded. Defrauded of the inheritance promised by your father, this pitiful estate must assist in filling up the deficit. I learn, indeed, from my lawyer," he continued, fixing a significant look upon Margaret, "that deeds are in existence, establishing your father's liability to the amount of certain mortgages hampering the estate; and that I, as husband of the universal legatee, am become the creditor of Monsieur Galiand. It depends upon yourself, madam, to render me a lenient one."

"That Léon should have sacrificed life and honour for the preservation of this property, in order to cast it away upon the man whom he despised!" exclaimed Madame de Breteuil, irritated beyond all self-control by the baseness of her husband's threats.

"Are you so complete an idiot as to imagine," retorted Breteuil, "that it was only to preserve his old rat-hole of a Chateau, that d'Armentières sold himself to the Prussians? You know better! You are fully aware that the chaste wife of his friend was the object of his generous solicitude. Yes!" added he, stamping with fury as he

spoke—"yes! you are perfectly aware that, had his Margaret been in a place of safety, the Prussians might have used the foundations of his father's hearth for paving-stones for aught he cared. *You—you* were the cause of his death—*you* the cause of his shame, as you are now of mine!"—

A flood of tears—the first she had shed since her misfortunes—came to the relief of Madame de Breteuil. Léon was acquitted—Léon was guiltless! What had she done to become the object of so dear, so rooted a devotion?—or what had she done to incur the calamity of losing so true a friend?

But her position admitted not of indulgence in such emotions. Many as had been her earthly trials, she felt that more awaited her. Breteuil was little inclined to neglect so advantageous an opportunity of establishing himself in the favour of a certain portion of the community, as by the possession of a fine *chateau de chasse* in the neighbourhood of Paris. His present object was to make Armentières his residence, as a pretext for absenting himself from a court where he was regarded with mistrust; little doubting that

his wife would be content to come to terms of compromise, accepting a sufficient maintenance for herself and her father, on condition of his undertaking to liquidate the incumbrances of the Armentières estate. But the noble Margaret, ever ready to sacrifice her feelings to the claims of others, acquainted him that the impossibility of removing her infirm father from a home which habit rendered dear and familiar, would compel her to the painful necessity of remaining under the same roof with him; and, though arrangements were made to prevent all further intercourse between them, Breteuil was at small pains to conceal his disappointment at her tenacity.

He resolved to weary out, by a series of petty personal annoyances, the patience of one whose mind he could not bend, whose heart he could not break. Persuaded that the determination of Margaret to remain at Armentières originated in her attachment for her dead lover more than for her living father, he strove to wound her feelings in every point which the memory of Léon rendered vulnerable. Assuming, with the utmost rigour, the masterhood conceded him by the laws, he caused all the favourite horses of the Baron to be

sold, the favourite dogs to be destroyed. The old servants of the family were ignominiously dismissed. Even Guillot and his grey-headed wife were thrust out from the place which a location of fifty years seemed to have consecrated as their own. But Margaret beheld all in silence. She knew that remonstrance or reproach would but aggravate the evil; and that Philippe de Breteuil acknowledged no moral responsibility either to Heaven above or man below.

Such were the destinies of Margaret—the fearful fruit of a disorganized frame of society!—

"What but misery could spring from a marriage so disproportionate as mine?" faltered the high-minded Countess, as she roamed through the gardens, now grown cheerless in her eyes. "Nature was outraged by such a compact, and my death alone will make atonement. A few short months, and my father will drop into the grave; when I shall be free to lay my head beside his hoary hairs. For so short a space, surely this man might leave me unmolested! I challenge not his rights—I resist not his encroachments—I oppose not his authority. Let him but refrain from insulting the dead — from desecrating all that is

hallowed in my eyes by the memory of Léon—and the estate of Armentières will soon be at his disposal."

Wandering in sorrowful meditation, the steps of Margaret gradually traversed the pleasure-grounds. Having crossed the brook, she entered the shady pathways of those hanging woods where Léon and herself had enjoyed together so many a solitary hour. Her father was, as usual, sleeping away his afternoon; Breteuil and a company of guests were off to the chase in an opposite direction; and the unhappy woman felt doubly at liberty to enjoy her only remaining solace—the free light and free air of heaven, in solitude and silence. Pausing here and there, to dwell upon reminiscences of happier times, or to pluck a flower from the very root which had once appeared to throw up its silvery blossoms for her delight and the delight of one who must behold them no more, the Countess found herself at length resting against the stem of a shattered tree, close beside the isolated hovel in which she and her father had taken refuge on the day of the arrival of the judges of the district.

"Better, perhaps, had the will never been

found!" she exclaimed, flinging a careless glance upon the blackened walls. "Were the natural heirs of Léon possessors here, would *they* have driven forth his poor to perish?—Would *they* have dismissed his faithful servants, or slain his faithful dog?—Better had the will never been found!"—

And with the restlessness of feelings ill at ease, Margaret was about to enter the cottage, when she perceived, with surprise, that the door, usually hanging shattered upon its hinges, was carefully closed. She applied her hand to the lock, to ascertain the cause of so strange a circumstance; but, lo! the door was barred and bolted within.

Attributing the change to some caprice on the part of the Count de Breteuil, Margaret was about to quit the spot and pursue her lonely wanderings, when, fixing her eyes inquiringly upon the dilapidated building as she regained the path, she heard the lock grate as with a turning key, and saw the door slowly open upon its hinges. Yet no one came forth—no one was visible—and a cold dew of terror rose upon the brow of the Countess, as the mystery seemed to involve itself in supernatural agency. To fly the place, was her only resource. But she seemed rooted to the spot; and

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when, as she stood with her eyes riveted on the building, she fancied she could discern her name pronounced in hoarse accents from within, a paroxysm of bewilderment seemed to inspire her. She rushed back to the hovel and crossed its blackened threshold.

"Margaret!" murmured a hollow voice, while a gaunt arm extended itself, and the door was violently closed and eagerly barred behind her—"Margaret! are you come at last?"—

"Yes, I am come!" she replied, gazing with awe upon that which she held to be the apparition of her departed friend. "I am come to lay my head cheerfully beside you in the grave. Nor had I tarried so long, but for the desolation of my poor friendless father."

"Margaret!" faltered anew the voice of Léon d'Armentières, as he flung back the matted locks from his wasted face, which the imperfect light, glimmering through the shuttered windows, scarcely enabled her to discern—"I know that I am unworthy to stand before you; that I am one whose name is blotted out from the memories of honourable men. But if I betrayed my anointed sovereign, and spat upon the cause of the country

I had sworn to serve, it was for *your* sake,—for yours whom, at the cost of honour and principle, I redeemed from a destiny worse than death! For *you* I trafficked with the enemy;—and speedy was my retribution! Attacked by my men—wounded—stunned—breathless—the peasants who snatched me from death harboured me under their roof from week to week, indifferent to my name or nature. The common tie of humanity sufficed them. On that field, expired my better life. Henceforward the name of Léon d'Armentières is with the dead; and the heart that loves you, Margaret;—ay, that loves you still, though crushed by shame, and feeble with long months of agony and danger,—is that of a nameless outcast; who has dragged himself hither but to look upon you again, and prostrate himself before you for one last word of pardon and pity!"—

As with slow and languid utterance these declarations proceeded from the parched lips of the haggard wretch before her, Margaret drew gradually nearer to him, fixed a more piercing gaze upon his face, and lent a more eager ear to those feeble accents; till conviction and transport came at once, and an hysterical shriek burst from the

depths of her heart, as she cried aloud that Léon was restored to her—that the breath of life was, indeed, in his nostrils, and the yearning of human affection in his heart!—

"You are come to resume your rights," cried she exultingly. "You are come to diffuse happiness — to dispense justice. The poor and the aged, the sick and the sorrowing, will bless the day that restores you to the home of your fathers!"—

"I am come for none of this, my Margaret," answered Léon, mildly. "He who would diffuse happiness, must have peace within his own bosom. He who would dispense justice, must have a conscience free from reproach. The name which has become a byword among men, must never more presume to connect itself with the awards of virtue."

"Mean you," cried Margaret, receding from his clasping arms, "that you abandon to the caprices of Monsieur de Breteuil the poor who have laboured for you, or even the hound that has fawned upon you?—You cannot be so heartless—so poor of spirit!"—

"Despise me, since it needs must be so,"

replied the broken-hearted man, falling on the bench from which he had arisen on her approach to the cottage; "for I do, indeed, want courage to brave the revilings of my brethren in arms—the scorn of the humble soldier, whose fidelity to his master raises him so high above me!—I have severed myself from the past!—Much anguish, nights of delirium, seem to have divided me from my very self. The sole portion to which I cling, is the remembrance of Margaret!—of Margaret, for whom I abjured all that might have bound me to life. My determination is taken!—I am about to quit France. Self-condemned to the destiny of Cain, I will bear my burthen of remorse to another hemisphere!—But I felt that it was not denied me to look on you again ere I departed; and I came hither, Margaret, in the shadow of night,—I took refuge in this desolate place,—I have lingered here three days, three nights, without rest, without food, trusting that chance would bring you hither, or enable me to seek your presence. I am exhausted now —miserably exhausted.—Had you delayed till another day, you might have found me lifeless here,—my unclosed eyes still turned towards the

home of my fathers, the walls that contain all that is dear to me on earth."

"Return with me openly to the Chateau," said Margaret, firmly. "Be yourself, Léon!—Rise superior to the sport of circumstances. In an hour of mad excitement, you sinned against your better reason. In calm afterthought, you have repented —have made atonement. The past will be forgotten—your frailty forgiven. Return with me, and resume your rights!"—

"Never!" murmured her companion. "Under the domination of the Bourbons, France is no country for *me*. *You* may overlook my faults—I will not hazard the contumely of others!"—

"Return with me," persisted Margaret. "Return, my friend—my champion—my brother!—Did you know how I have been trampled on—did you know what misery is heaped on my head——"

"Come thou rather, then, with *me!*" interrupted Léon, seizing her hands, and pressing them to his bosom. "Come with me to the land of freedom—the land of labour and content. *There*, Margaret — there we will create anew an honourable name—there we shall be happy—there ——"

"There we should be *self*-condemned, even as here condemned by the sentence of mankind," replied Margaret, extricating herself from his embraces. "Would you have me despise *you*—would you have me despise *myself*—even as I despise and detest such things as Philippe de Breteuil?—No, Léon! Still let me love and reverence you as a dear and most devoted friend—as one for whom I would lay down my life, or with whom I would as gladly share it, could our union subsist without a crime. But you are faint," cried she, perceiving that his head drooped lower upon his bosom. "You need food—you want repose. Léon—dear Léon—lean on me. To the Chateau—to the Chateau!"—

Fruitless were her exhortations. The excitement produced by their re-union once tranquillized, D'Armentières sank slowly on the ground, overpowered by fatigue, inanition, fever, and pain. Reluctant as she was to leave him in such a condition, Margaret felt that her only chance of preserving his life was to hasten back to the house to procure aid and nourishment; and, whispering a few words of encouragement in his scarcely conscious ear, she hurried from the place, recrossed

the brook, and, with incredible speed, regained the Chateau.

The first person she encountered on entering the courtyard, was the Count de Breteuil! Uttering a scarcely intelligible excuse, she broke from him, to provide herself with wine and other restoratives. But the suspicions of Breteuil being excited by her incoherence, he insisted on an explanation; refusing to lose sight of her till she made an ample confession of the cause of her agitation. There was no alternative. Delay must be fatal to Léon. She told all.—She implored the assistance of Breteuil,—she threw herself on his mercy!

But for the intense agitation manifested by his wife, Breteuil would probably have regarded her miraculous narrative as the coinage of a disordered mind. But there was no mistrusting the irrepressible emotion of Margaret. He doubted not for a moment that Léon still lived, and had returned to claim his own.

"You say truly—not a moment must be lost!" he exclaimed, drawing her suddenly into the vaulted chamber which served as the domestic chapel of the Chateau. And, in a moment, the

Countess discovered that she had fallen into a snare—that she was a prisoner—that the secret of Léon was in the keeping of his deadliest enemy !—Vainly did she shriek for help—vainly tear her hair, and call for mercy !—The chapel stood apart from the house; no one heard—no one heeded. The heavy minutes lengthened into hours. The evening light from the lofty windows proclaimed the close of day; and Margaret felt that the fate of Léon was by that time decided ! To the impassioned state of excitement under which she had been labouring, succeeded, at length, a heavy stupor. In her intervals of consciousness she perceived that food was set beside her—that a mattrass had been placed for her on the marble floor.

At length, she heard footsteps approaching the door, and, starting up, strove to smooth her disordered dress, and bind back her dishevelled hair. But when the infamous Breteuil, followed by several strangers, entered the chapel,—unable to restrain herself, she rushed towards him, and demanded, with frantic violence, what he had done with her friend,—whether Léon yet lived, and lived for her.

"You perceive, gentlemen," said Breteuil, addressing himself to his companions, "that my statement was not exaggerated. A more confirmed case of mental aberration never manifested itself. Before, however, you remove this unhappy lady to the asylum at Charenton, I could wish you to examine her case more particularly. You will find her insist that the unfortunate Baron d'Armentières (who, as you all know, fell a victim six months ago in the neighbourhood of Montereau) is still alive, and inhabiting this Chateau. She will tell you that she saw him yesterday," he continued, disengaging from his sleeve the grasping hands of Margaret, and turning away from the expressive glance fixed by her dark eyes upon his face.

"And is your villany equal to this?"—she ejaculated, perceiving in a moment the drift of his assertions.

"You will, I trust, be gentle in your treatment, gentlemen," resumed Breteuil, preparing to quit the room. "This lady merits every deference,—every consideration at your hands."

He went;—and Margaret trusted that, during his absence, her simple history would suffice to

enlighten the professional judges to whom her case was entrusted. But to her grief and dismay, she perceived that every word she uttered, yielding confirmation to their preconceived idea, served only to establish the evidence of her insanity.

"Poor creature,—poor unhappy young creature!" exclaimed the elder of the physicians. "It is her fixed desire, I perceive, to take us with her to the hovel, where she declares this Baron (doubtless some former lover) to be concealed. Let us indulge her caprice. The concession may assist our conjectures as to the probable duration of her malady."

"Now, then," thought Margaret, "all is safe, and my rationality established.—I shall be set at liberty—at liberty to seek out Léon!"

But on conducting them through the gardens to the fatal cottage, the Countess noticed, as she approached, that the door was once more ajar.

"He is gone!"—she cried, clasping her hands.—"Many days and nights have elapsed since the scene I described to you. Heaven grant he may have so far recovered as to have escaped this place!"

She paused on the threshold. A sickening chill came over her. Not a trace of Léon was there! Breteuil, who now joined the party, cast significant glances at the doctors, as if to point out the authentication of his previous statements. But Margaret observed that his eye unquietly followed hers, as she pursued her investigations; and, noting the uneasiness of his looks, she fancied he turned pale as she approached a certain spot of the chamber in which she had found and left Léon d'Armentières.

"Behold!" cried she to her companions, "here are traces of a struggle on the trampled ground,—here are blood spots,—here is human hair scattered about! And, lo! this fragment of dark grey cloth—I can swear to it as part of the tattered dress worn by my ill-fated friend!—I understand it all!—Léon has been murdered, ay, *murdered* "

"You hear her?" observed Breteuil, with a mournful wave of the head. "She is becoming violent again. Coercion, I fear, may be once more necessary. The sooner, therefore, she is removed from this place, and permanently established under your care, the better for her health and comfort."

"You will not surely take me hence without further examination?" shrieked Margaret, as they were about to lead her from the cottage. "Let the worst be ascertained. I swear to you that Léon has been assassinated! His remains cannot be far from hence. Let the wood be searched—let the ground be dug up."—

"She will injure herself by this violence!" said Breteuil, mildly. "Carry her, therefore, to the carriage, and instantly away to Charenton. It is too severe a trial to behold my unfortunate wife in this condition."

* * * *

Such is the strange eventful history it was my fortune to hear on visiting some years ago the lunatic asylum at Charenton. The beautiful woman by whom it was recounted to me, was evidently pining away into the grave. All her cry was for justice,—justice against the murderer of Léon,—justice against her husband!—

The illusions possessing the brain of the unfortunate Margaret, were of course met only by more rigorous treatment on the part of her keepers; for Count Philippe de Breteuil her husband is one of the most popular men in existence,

and has served with distinction in a recent administration of the present government.

Nothing can exceed the sympathy testified towards him on account of the infirmity of his wife.

"There was probably insanity pre-existing in her family," say they. "However, he deserves some punishment for having condescended to such a *mésalliance!* The idea of an obscure nobody,—a Margaret Galiand,—a girl without a grandfather,—being snatched out of her humble sphere to become the Wife of an Aristocrat!"

NEIGHBOUR GRAY AND HER DAUGHTER.

Among the vestiges of Papistry still perceptible in England, is the dedication of every town and village to some patron saint. This latent influence of a "creed outworn," assumes, however, a very harmless shape; by fixing the epochs of fairs and feasts,—of fairs which tend to the annual or bi-annual recreation of our towns, and of feasts which serve to gather together, once a year, the scattered tribes of our villages. Neither France nor Belgium is more punctilious in keeping up the *fêtes*, *ducasses*, or *kermesses* of its hamlets and villages, than the northern districts of England!—

It was at Falkstone Feast that the simple heart

of Mary Gray became very unexpectedly exposed to the seductions of a London suitor. Falkstone is a pretty village on the confines of Nottinghamshire; which, every November,—just as its soil becomes glutinized into the consistency of pitch, and the little brook by which it is traversed swells so as to render the lower grounds impassable,—rewards itself for the arrival of winter and typhus fever by celebrating its annual feast, dedicated, in the olden time, as well as its parish church, to the cloak-rending saint, St Martin; and solemnized, in latter times, with considerable slaughter of fatted calves, and a massacre of half the fowls and turkeys of the barnyards of the neighbourhood.

Every 11th of November, down come flitches and hams from housewifely chimneys. Barrels of beer are broached in the richer farms; long-hoarded and long-bearded bottles of currant or cowslip wine are brought forth; a glorious confusion of pork-pies and apple-pies steams in the oven; and scarce a hut or hovel in Falkstone so wanting in means or public spirit, as not to show a well-scoured deal table covered with some sort of cheer, from the well-spiced round of pressed beef, down to a barley-loaf and angle of pale-faced

Derby cheese,—in order to welcome from afar the kinsfolk and acquaintance, the hundredth cousins or neighbours' children, who repair, for the annual renewal of such associations, to the clayey parish, constituting what is called their "native soil." The custom is as good as it is old. Patriotism is the natural growth of such attachments. As the abounding river is fed by tributary streamlets, love of parish, county, country, form an inevitable gradation of patriotic virtue.

Twenty years ago, Falkstone was so fortunate as to boast of four Tritons among its fifteen hundred minnows. The manor was let off in small farms. None of the inhabitants were very wealthy, none of them very poor; and, consequently, as few of them subject to the pangs of envy as the infirmities of human nature would allow. The homely old church boasted not a single pew whose hassocks were covered with a nobler tissue than rush matting; and, excepting one very severe winter, not a Christian was known to have died of want in the place. This, considering that the rector was a non-resident, and that Falkstone boasted no squire's family to parade its Christmas dole of coals and blankets, is as much

as can be expected of any decent parish of modern times.

Among the poorer inhabitants, was a widow-woman known by the name of Neighbour Gray. — "Neighbour," by the way, is a title of honour peculiar to village life. — Stiff-necked Grosvenor square disdains the bonds of neighbourship; and, even in country towns, people are beginning to ignore the existence of the regard derivable a century ago from similar propinquities. But in places such as Falkstone, a neighbour (in the worldly as well as the Christian sense of the word) still implies one who is to be loved as thyself; one who has a claim for succour and support; one whose sheep you are to assist in pulling out of a ditch; whose sicknesses you are to aid in nursing, and whose offspring you are to save from oppression. In Falkstone, after slaving all day in the harvest-field, you would be expected to sit up at night with a sick "neighbour," who had none other to "do for her;" just as, in Grosvenor square, it would be a breach of politeness even to inquire after the health of a dying next-door neighbour, on whose visiting-list your name has not been previously inscribed—so officious an act

exposing you to the opprobrious suspicion of trying to force an acquaintance with the inmates.

Neighbour Gray, to her honour be it spoken, had never been known at Falkstone under any other denomination: she was neither Mrs Gray in her husband's life-time, nor Widow Gray after his decease; nor was even old age and misery likely to reduce her to the ignominy of "Goody"—for she was a friendly, serviceable woman, who had done much to merit her distinction; having acquired as much popularity by the kind-hearted activity with which she lent a hand at a neighbour's baking, brewing, washing, or scrubbing, as ever was obtained by the dinners of a noble lord, boasting a French cook with a salary doubling that of the curate of Falkstone. Neighbour Gray was, accordingly, a very happy woman. She lay down to rest every night, rich in the goodwill of every soul to whom her name was familiar.

Of her two children, Dick, the elder, had died in his apprenticeship, while Mary lived with her mother,—a pretty, delicate girl, too pretty and too delicate for the stirring duties likely to fall to her lot; for hard service was the only prospect of

Mary Gray. In order to lay by something for her mother's old age (who, as a poor widow disdaining parish aid, had been able to lay by nothing for herself), Mary must inevitably look out for a place as soon as she should attain her seventeenth year, and some degree of strength and self-reliance. But Mary had no means of reaching London, where her prettiness and gentility might pass for qualifications; and the farmers' wives had little mind to engage a poor slip of a girl, who looked as if she had scarcely strength to turn a mangle or handle a churn.

For the sake of Neighbour Gray, so good a char-woman in her time, they gave her daughter employment in needlework; but Mary was able to earn little more than her day's food; and this was the more lamentable, because her mother was showing symptoms of infirmity. A clay floor in a damp village, and hard labour fourteen hours a-day, are as apt to bring on premature old age as the enervation of hot rooms and fashionable vigils; and want of sufficient nourishment is as hard a pull upon the constitution as those evil results which the President of the College of Physicians denounces to the lordly

epicure his patient, from a course of turtle and venison. Mary saw that her mother would soon need her assistance, and promised herself that, at the next Statute, she would certainly attempt to put herself forward in life.

Previous, however, to the Statute, unluckily came Falkstone Feast; and Neighbour Gray having been engaged to aid in the grand preparations at Welland's farm, was invited to bring her daughter, and share in the general entertainment during the three days of the Feast. Open house was kept; and, on the third night, the festivities were to end with a supper and dance in Farmer Welland's barn, at which nearly all the inhabitants of Falkstone were to be present. Neighbour Gray figured, for that night only, in the gown of gay glazed calico in which, every feast since her wedding-day, she had made her annual appearance; and Mary thought herself almost too fine in a new stuff gown, spun by the hands of her mother, and sewed by her own. Both were very happy. Mary's eyes were bright with girlish joyousness, and her usually pale cheeks flushed with the excitement of the season; while Neighbour Gray was sufficiently happy in hearing from

so many old friends, become strangers by long absence from the village, what a pretty lass little Mary had turned out; and knowing that most of the guests gathered together at Falkstone, pronounced her daughter to be the queen of the village. Nor were Mary's ears less attentive than those of her mother. Admiration flushed her cheek to a yet brighter blush, and lighted up a still more brilliant sparkle in her eyes; and when she found herself chosen as a partner for the opening of the ball, by "a young gentleman from Lon'on, visiting at the farm"—an object of contention to all the coquettes of the village,—poor Mary smiled a smile well worthy of a London beauty.

William Harding, the young gentleman from Lon'on, who was visiting Falkstone in company with the young nephew of old Welland, and heir to his property, seemed to consider it his duty to make up in courtesy and vivacity for the taciturn reserve of Frank Welland; who was what is called in England, among the great, high; among the little, odd-tempered; and what ought to be called, among great, little, and middle-sized, *shy*. Shyness is in fact one of the most prevalent national

peculiarities of our countrymen; taking various shapes, according to station and estate, but insuring the common consequence of rendering the sufferer an object of dislike instead of commiseration. Frank Welland, even in his native village, passed for a disagreeable, sulky young man; while William Harding was voted, by general acclamation, a good fellow, before he had been four-and-twenty hours in the place. He sang a good song, told a good story; and, when he stood up to dance with Mary, they made as pretty a couple as had ever been seen in Falkstone. It was only Neighbour Gray (who had been present at Frank Welland's birth, and helped to lay his parents in the grave) that inclined in favour of the stern, sullen, hard-featured youth, who stood silently looking on, disdaining to join in the dance—some said, because he was too proud, some, because he was too good, but, in reality, because he was too shy.

William Harding, meanwhile, was not only free from any such infirmity; but the necessity of making from an early age his own way in the world, had impressed upon his mind the conviction that popularity is one of the stepping-stones to

advancement. He had not naturally a bad disposition; but, without parents to turn his good ones to account, the germs withered for want of sunshine. Reared by the family of a distant relation to which he was a burthen, William Harding grew up prudent instead of virtuous. Character, not excellence, was his aim in life; and, just as he saw his cousin, the Cheapside mercer, insist upon the advantage of a good surface to his silks and satins as an equally vendible quality with the more costly one of solid consistency, William came to regard reputation as the one thing needful, both in public and private life. Some people talk, in all awkward emergencies, of "putting a good face on the matter;" William Harding's course consisted in putting a good face upon life.

It was perhaps the unpopularity of his friend Frank Welland (who officiated, first as clerk, and next as junior partner, in a small house of business adjoining the large one of his own wealthy relative) which first roused his attention to the prudence of being agreeable; and all that Neighbour Gray performed at Falkstone, out of the abundance of her warm feelings and Christian

principles, was done in Cheapside by William Harding as a matter of calculation. He had computed the per centage likely to be returned by his good offices; and proved so adroit a moral arithmetician, that his cheery fortnight at Welland's farm was the repayment of his attentions to Frank during a long illness the preceding winter. Even of the relations by whom, as an awkward boy, he had been disliked as a burthen, he contrived, between fifteen and twenty, to render himself a favourite. He was so useful, so civil, so attentive! It was the fate of the rich mercer to outlive his children, with the exception of one puny daughter; and already it was predicted in the city, that old Harding would eventually bestow Sophia and her fortune upon the kinsman who was so useful to him in his business, and so comfortable to him in his domestic life; or, if the young lady chose otherwise, that the business in Cheapside, at least, would descend to William Harding. At present, however, he was still on probation. Sophy was only sixteen, and William, at four-and-twenty, still a shopman with a good salary. He might either be discarded on the morrow, or promoted to be the son-in-law of his master.

Such was the state of things at the period of his visit to Welland's farm; which visit, much as he seemed to enjoy it, was a matter of calculation. William thought his relation slow in pressing his advancement; and, fancying that old Harding, from whose side, for ten years past, he had never been separated half as many days, might be stimulated by his absence to a higher appreciation of his utility, humbly requested leave to accompany his bosom friend, Frank Welland, into Notts.

"Why, what can Frank Welland be wanting to leave town for, at this stirring season, just as the winter orders are coming in?" demanded the matter-of-fact mercer of Cheapside.

"He is going, sir, to visit the uncle who brought him up."

The mercer sneered.

"The uncle, sir, whose property is coming to him."

"Ay, ay?—and why does he choose such a time of year as this? Why can't he go, pray, in August or September, when town's thin and business slack?"

"Falkstone Feast, it seems, sir, takes place at

Martinmas, when it is the custom of the country for the families of the place to meet together."

"And do you belong to one of the families of the place?"—

"Frank Welland is desirous to make me known to *his*. There will be a great deal of merry-making going forward; and, as you have always thought well of Frank, sir, and expressed yourself willing that we should be friends together, I consider the opportunity a good one to afford myself a little recreation."

"Recreation in a farm house in a rainy November!—Pretty recreation!—Pretty moment for the country!—There hasn't been a leaf on the tree in St Paul's Churchyard this fortnight past."

"Certainly, sir, if you cannot spare me," rejoined William, "I shall not think of pressing my request."

"If you want amusement, why can't you go to the playhouses?"—remonstrated old Harding. "I'm sure you seemed gay enough, t'other night, at the club."

"A little change of air and scene," William began.

"Oh, go!—*go* if you like.—*I* don't want to

hinder you," replied old Harding, testily. "If you find pleasure in the company of that sulky young fellow, Frank Welland, I wish you joy of your taste. Your cousin Sophy will be home from school in six weeks, and then——"

"I shall be back, sir, in less than *two*," interrupted William; "and if my going is likely to be the least inconvenience to the business, I shall be most happy to give up the excursion altogether."

"Inconvenience!—Why, what have Clark and Wilkinson to do but attend to their duties?—Wilkinson is the steadiest young man that ever entered my shop, and no one better understands his business than Clark. No! make the best of your way to Falkstone Feast, and let me hear no more about the matter."

William was now almost inclined to withdraw his petition. But it was too late. The old gentleman insisted that he should go; and the young one could only hope that his kinsman was finessing as well as himself; and that, instead of according his confidence to the smug, smooth, demure Gabriel Wilkinson, he would become hourly more sensible of the loss of a relative to whom alone, of all the house, he accorded unlimited confidence.

To Falkstone, therefore, the two young men repaired by the night coach; and, though William Harding had not been sufficiently misled by the rhapsodies of his usually silent and reserved companion, to expect great things of the village and farm which were *home* to Frank, he was careful not to betray to those who welcomed him so warmly, his amazement that persons in their right minds could prefer living in a place whose ways were so miry, and whose homesteads so mean. William, at heart a pure Cockney, languished after the wide pavements and radiant gas of Cheapside. He could not comprehend the hearty shake of the hand bestowed by Frank Welland upon Neighbour Gray. Neighbour Gray appeared to *him* only a foolish old charwoman: the only thing he saw to admire in her was a calimanco petticoat of a peculiar quality—"a stuff that had been out of make in the trade for the last twenty years."

The nature of the country-bred youth soon broke out in Frank, and the day following his arrival, he was out with his uncle in a survey of the farm; and the day following (as the hounds met within four miles' distance) mounted a favourite mare bred on the farm, and was not at

home again till some hours after dark. But William Harding displayed no similar propensities. William loitered with the lasses about the village, entering into the sports and gossipings of the place; and, in eight-and-forty hours, had completely established his popularity among those who, in spite of the commendations of Farmer Welland and Neighbour Gray, persisted in considering Master Frank as a very *unked* young gentleman, who did little honour to his London breeding. They saw too much of sportsmen to care for his manliness, and too little of fine gentlemen to regard the courteous deportment of William Harding as anything short of the pink of the London mode.

The young men were to spend ten days at Falkstone; the first week of which, was chiefly engrossed by the hospitalities of the Feast. The last three days were passed by Frank in visiting and bidding adieu to his various kinsfolk; and it was on the day preceding their departure—which they had agreed to devote to a walk across the country, to dine at the house of a young farmer, with whom, during the recent festivities, they had formed a friendship,—that Frank, so taciturn in

company, began suddenly to wax garrulous in descanting on his future prospects.

"If my uncle would but make up his mind to bring matters between us to a settlement!"—cried he. "Like most old people, he likes to keep a hard grip on his property to the last minute, and a close tongue concerning his intentions of disposing of it. As far as he has ever told me, the 800*l.* laid out to establish me in business, is all I am to expect from him; but, as he has no relations but myself, I am pretty sure of coming into what he has to leave."

"Of course—to be sure,"—replied William, whose thoughts were elsewhere; "and, as you are getting on so well in life, you can afford to wait."

"No, I can't," was the blunt reply of Frank. "I want to get away from London altogether."

"Away from London?—Why, I thought that, when old Grimstone died, you were to come into the whole business?"

"And so I am. But I care nothing for the business."

"Nothing for the business?—Didn't you tell me that, last year, it returned you seventeen per

cent., and that you have a year's orders before you!"

"*Eighteen!* But what is that to the purpose? I hate London—I have always hated it; and now the prospect of returning there makes me detest it more than ever."

"You surprise me!" cried his companion. "Independent as you are——"

"I am *not* independent, since my uncle insists upon my sticking to business," replied Frank. "My uncle gave me a good country education, brought me up with country tastes and habits; and, when everybody at Falkstone thought he was going to settle me at home, to assist and succeed him in the farm as my father would have done had he survived, he bundles me off to London, and plants me behind a counter—a thing that, by nature, I was never made for."

"He wanted you, perhaps, to see something of life?"

"He wanted to get me out of the way. The old gentleman likes to be master at home; and, when I rebelled against being driven off to town like a beast to Smithfield market, told me outright

he would not have a grown-up nephew shoving him out of his place before his time; and that he did not mean to take off his shoes till he went to bed."

"Well, if you make sure of having the shoes when he does go to bed, you ought to be satisfied."

"And so I would. God knows I don't want to deprive the old gentleman of an inch of his property. But, if I am to earn my inheritance by slaving away the best of my days in the smother and noise of the city, I'd rather be a day-labourer at Falkstone."

William Harding looked with a smile of pity upon the innate rustic, so little deserving his prospects of preferment.

"My uncle may live these ten, these fifteen years!" cried Frank, striking his stick harder on the ground, as they trudged on. "It is not for me, to whom he has been so kind a friend, to wish his days shortened."

"The farmer is ten years older than my cousin Harding," observed William, musingly; "yet, you see, *I* do not grumble—*I* am satisfied to wait."

"To be sure you are—because you will marry your cousin Sophy,—live according to your

own likings in London, and devote yourself to improve a business which you know will one day be your own. While *I* am not only constrained to a way of life I abhor, but when the time arrives that is to make me my own master, Mary Gray will be an old woman, or, perhaps, availing herself of my absence, be married to another."

It had need of all William Harding's self-command to prevent his stopping short and fixing his eyes on the face of his companion, as he exclaimed —"Mary Gray!—Are you engaged then to marry Mary Gray?"—

"We are not even what is called sweethearts," replied Frank, with perfect composure. "When I was last at Falkstone, the girl was but fifteen; and, though I then made a vow to myself that none but she whom I had danced on my knee as a child, should be my wife, I knew it would anger my uncle even to hint at such a thing. And so, things remain as they were."

"But you know yourself to be as sure of Mary's affections as you are of old Welland's property?"—

"I used to think so. Neighbour Gray loves me as a son of her own; and it was but natural

Mary should grow up with a liking for her old playmate.—But, out of sight, out of mind! Since I have been here this time, I fancy I notice a change in Mary's manner; and, though I can't make out that any one has been courting her during my absence (such a mild, delicate creature as it is, the young fellows hereabouts seem afraid she would not make enough of a housewife for them, for, in truth, Mary is not strong enough to do much in a family), still, I can see that I am not so great a favourite as I used to be."

"Perhaps her mother may have doubts about your being in earnest, and have warned the girl to be on her guard," said William, in a confused manner.

"In *earnest?*—on her *guard?*" reiterated Frank. "You don't know Neighbour Gray! There's not a thought of evil or guile in that woman's mind. She's above any such manœuvring notions. If Mary has grown cold, it is because she likes me less than she used; or, perhaps, she hates the thoughts of a town life as much as I do, and is afraid I might be wanting to marry her at once, and carry her away from her mother."

"I am told she is likely to leave Falkstone

without any such interference," observed William, carelessly. "Mrs Gray, it seems, is in bad circumstances."

"*Neighbour* Gray," amended Frank.

"And Mary is going out to service in a month or two."

"Mary going out to service?—Who told you so?"

"It is the common talk of the farm; so that I should think a settlement in life as the wife of an honest man in a good business ——"

"Yes; but *you* know that I cannot make her the wife of an honest man in a good business. Were I to talk of marrying Neighbour Gray's daughter, my uncle would cut me off with a shilling; and what would then become of my mother and sister, whom, you know, it is my duty and happiness to support?"

"Well, well, I meant no offence," replied William. "For my part, I think you have no call to think of marrying for the next ten years, when you will be free to follow your own fancies; and, after all, Mary Gray will be but seven-and-twenty."

Nevertheless, before the actual departure of the

young men from Falkstone, Frank *did* think it necessary to come to some explanation with the object of his affections. William Harding met them entering together the farm, from the garden, where Mary had been sent to gather herbs by her mother, and where young Welland had made himself so thoroughly understood, that Mary was forced to speak as plainly as himself. So far from accepting his offer of such pecuniary assistance to her mother as would prevent the necessity of her going out to service till the death of old Welland should enable him to make the daughter his wife and the mother his inmate, Mary assured him that Neighbour Gray would disdain being indebted for support to any but her own or her daughter's industry; and that, were he already in possession of Welland's farm, she should decline to become its mistress and his wife.

Frank was not nettled by this declaration—he was deeply hurt; too much hurt, indeed, to confess to his friend and confidant how much he had hazarded, and how much in vain. Once, when, in the course of their journey back to town, William attempted to advert to Neighbour Gray and Mary, Frank replied so abruptly that he had given up all

thoughts of her, that there was no possibility of pushing the question.

Meanwhile, William had laid his plans so cunningly as to insure the warmest reception from Harding of Cheapside. He knew that, were the old gentleman apprised of the day of his arrival, he would get up an air of indifference, to prevent the young truant from fancying himself of too much consequence. But, by arriving unexpectedly one evening after tea, when the old gentleman was wearying after his usual antagonist for his game at cribbage, he was sure of being received with open arms as "long-looked-for come at last."—In another month, cousin Sophy was at home; and, in the diversions of the holidays—twelfth-cake parties, balls, and pantomimes—enjoyed with the father and cousin, Falkstone appeared to be forgotten.

Time passed on. It was noticed by Clark and Wilkinson, and other small observers, to whom the proceedings of William Harding afforded a matter of interest, that, from the period of their return from Falkstone Feast, the two young men were less in each other's company than before. But who could wonder? Frank Welland, always

so dry and uncompanionable, was now more morose than ever; and William soon acquired a painful accession to his duties. During his absence in the north, the old mercer had beguiled the tedium of his solitude by consulting a new apothecary, and attempting a sudden change of diet and prescriptions; and was now as ill in earnest as before in fancy, though his daughter was recalled permanently home to become his nurse. The management of the business, too, fell entirely to his hands. Saving one week in the course of the ensuing summer, when he proceeded in person to Nottingham, in the interest of the concern, William was not a moment away from Cheapside. He was evidently doing his utmost to please the old man; and, in spite of the peevishness of age and sickness, fully succeeded.

At length Martinmas came round again; and one evening, as William Harding was passing Welland's shop, on his way to his weekly club, he stepped in, for the first time for many months, to chat; inquiring in a careless manner, whether, this Feast, Frank intended to visit Falkstone?

"I am not even invited," was the young man's

reply. "My uncle is not quite so fond of my company as old Harding of yours; and once in two years, is as often as he seems inclined to see me at the farm."

Still harping on the subject, William proceeded to a few casual inquiries concerning the Nottinghamshire friends and acquaintances he had made the preceding year. But Frank could tell him nothing. His uncle was a bad correspondent; and, when he *did* write, dwelt more upon the condition of his stock and the prospects of his fields, than upon village news. William even hazarded an express inquiry concerning Neighbour Gray and her daughter; but Frank immediately stopped short. Colouring deeply, he seemed to feel it impossible to allude to Mary; and broke off into questions concerning the prevailing rumour of an approaching marriage between William and Miss Harding.

"Yes," replied William, assuming a more cheerful tone—"everything is settled. As soon as Sophy enters her eighteenth year, she is to be my wife. Her father gives me up the business, and all the rest is to follow at his death. A fine prospect for one who, like myself, began the

world with nothing, and am not yet five-and-twenty."

Three months afterwards, as Frank Welland was listening to the gossiping account given over his counter by some neighbour of the grand doings about to take place at William's wedding, which was fixed for the following week, a letter was put into his hand, which bore the Falkstone post-mark, requiring his immediate attendance at the farm, as his uncle had undergone a paralytic attack, and was speechless.

Frank was at Falkstone on the following day; and, after visiting the bedside of the now insensible old man, and learning from the medical attendant that, though his uncle might linger for a few weeks or even months, his recovery was impossible, young Welland noticed several strange faces about the place. Almost mechanically he uttered an inquiry after Neighbour Gray.

"Ah, poor Neighbour Gray!"—replied the venerable dairy-woman to whom his question was addressed—"the old soul has never held up her head since."

"Since what?"

"Since poor Mary's business. Neighbour Gray keeps her bed, Master Frank; and, as the poor soul has no one to look to her, or doctor her, like the farmer here, it's likely sickness 'll get the uppermost."

"But Mary—*Mary* ——"

"And, maybe, 'tis the best thing as can happen to the poor 'oman," persisted the contemporary whose sympathies were enlisted rather with the mother than the daughter; "for what has she to look to in life, now as it's all up with her daughter?"—

"What is up with her daughter?—what has happened to Mary?"—interrupted Frank, with unusual impetuosity.

"Such a mother surely as she has been!" continued the dame, raising her hands and eyes; "and to be so rewarded at last!"

And Frank, finding it impossible to worm out of the old woman the information he desired, dashed off out of the house; and, meeting in the farmyard his uncle's favourite herdsman, an intelligent man, for years an inmate of the house, he resumed his inquiries touching Neighbour Gray and her daughter.

"Ah, poor Mary! I'm feared, Master Frank, 'twill turn out a bad business," replied the man.

"What will turn out a bad business?—For God's sake, speak!—I have never heard a word of the matter!"—cried young Welland.

"Why, Lord bless your heart alive, Master Frank, where have you been a-living? Nothen' else was talked of in Falkstone town for a month or more; and, God knows, poor Neighbour Gray has never looked one in the face sin' ——"

"Since ——"

"Sin' Mary was put in jail for child-murder."

"Child-murder?—Mary Gray in jail?"—faltered Frank.

"Well may you be surprised. But you see, Master Frank, older heads than yourn foretold as no good 'ould come out when Mary persisted in setting off to the place she had heard of in Notten'am, in spite of mother and friends, and all as was bound to advise the poor lass. All she had to say in answer was, as there was fourteen pound a-year to be arned—and that's wages as is not to be had every day;—and was not to be over-

looked by the daughter of poor Neighbour Gray. So away went the girl, sir; and, being no scholar with her pen, though so good a hand at the needle, she got some un to write home for her, as she was comfortably settled with a good master and missus, and to forward a couple of guineas to her mother as she'd got in the way of arnest. Well, sir, all this was well and good; and Neighbour Gray, though sure enough she was always pining after the girl's company, used to comfort herself by the notion, that, maybe in a year's time, Mary would get leave to come home to Falkstone for a day or two; or, if not, she would make the best of her way to Notten'am for a peep at the lass. But, Lord bless you, Master Frank! afore the year was quite at an end, comes news to Justice Snokes, up at Barleywood, to make inquiries at Falkstone concerning one Mary Gray as had been tooked up at Notten'am on suspicion of making away with a alligitinet child."

"Gracious God!" cried Frank. "And the unfortunate creature has been convicted, then?"

"The 'sizes don't come on till next week; but, from all as one hears, the poor lass has little

chance. And, surely, to think of Neighbour Gray's daughter coming to the gallows!—It seems to bring shame upon the whole village."

The gallows! — Frank Welland clenched his hands till the blood started, and gnashed his teeth for very anguish, as, without hesitation, he took his way to the cottage of Neighbour Gray—*not* for the satisfaction of his misgivings—*not* even with an intention of alluding to the name of Mary —but to afford his mite of consolation to the unhappy old woman who had assisted to watch over his infancy, and whose grey hairs were about to be brought down in sorrow to the grave. It was June—genial, breezy, hope-breathing June ;—yet the door of the cottage, usually so hospitably ajar, was closed against the sunshine ; and, when Frank Welland entered, instead of the busy sounds of industry, formerly saluting him—Neighbour Gray croning some old ditty over her house-work, or as an accompaniment to the whir of the spinning-wheel—all was still as death. The old woman sat in her lonely arm-chair, with her back turned to the window, and her eyes fixed upon the embers, as if listening to a far off sound.

Reserved as Frank Welland was on most occa-

sions, for once he waxed eloquent; to express to the distressed mother his hopes that she would command his utmost assistance, either pecuniary or personal, to administer to the service of one who had proved so little worthy of the love they bore her. But Neighbour Gray listened and listened, and seemed to lack comprehension or courage to reply; for she uttered not a single syllable. At length, on some expression falling from Frank, that implied his apprehension of the worst, and his conviction of the guilt of the accused, she exclaimed—

"Why, sure, it is not you, Master Frank, who have known the girl from her cradle, who could believe her capable of taking away an innocent life?"

"It is hard, indeed, for *me* to think ill of Mary," replied young Welland, with quivering lips. "Mary was the dearest thing I had on earth. Mary might have been my wife before now, had she chosen to accept an honest man for her husband; but I'm fain to fear, Neighbour Gray, from all I've just now been hearing, that things will go hard with her."

"Fear no such a thing, Master Frank," replied

the old woman with firmness. "If I sit grieving here, it is for the trouble into which my poor child has fallen, not for any danger that threatens her. To be sure, the law is a frightful thing; but, masterful as it is, it can't go to prove a thing as never happened upon the 'varsal 'arth. I have word from Mary, Master Frank, that, as sure as God is above us, she is innocent of the crime laid to her charge; and Mary's plain word is more to me than all the oaths ever sworn in a court of justice. From a babe to a woman, never did those lips of hers utter an untruth!"

An involuntary sob burst from Neighbour Gray, as she offered this tender testimony to the virtues of her girl. Even Frank felt comforted by the assurance; and he had now courage to listen to the poor mother's details concerning the suspicions under which Mary had fallen, the investigations instituted by her master and mistress, and the evidence upon which she had been committed to take her trial for child-murder. The birth of an infant she admitted; yet not only refused to give up the name of the father, but persisted in swearing that it had been removed

from Nottingham immediately after its birth, and was still in existence. Further than this, not a syllable could be extracted from the prisoner. Frank Welland's suspicions were now excited. Connecting the visit of William Harding to Nottingham, the preceding summer, with the partiality he had betrayed for Mary on his visit to Falkstone, and her own subsequent coldness towards himself, Frank saw sufficient justification for addressing a letter to his young friend—not absolutely of accusation, but acquainting Harding with the actual situation of Mary Gray, and imploring him, if aware of any circumstance tending to establish her innocence, to bring it forward without delay. He mentioned that nothing but his uncle's dying state prevented his starting for Nottingham, to act a brother's part by the poor prisoner; and ended by a forcible appeal to the feelings of his friend.

"Think what would be Heaven's judgment on those who are really chargeable with the suspicions under which she labours," wrote young Welland, "if Mary Gray, at nineteen years of age, should be condemned to death for a crime of

which she is as innocent as yourself. *To death!—Think of that*, William!—and do not fail to return an instant answer to my letter."

William Harding's reply was inconclusive and unsatisfactory; but agitation of mind was so perceptible in every line it contained, as fully to confirm the suspicions of Frank. He began by imploring Welland, if he valued his reputation and comfort in life, to refrain from addressing him again on the subject. "Next Tuesday is my wedding-day," said he; "and should such a letter as I have just received from you fall into Sophy's hands, Heaven knows what might be the consequences. I am as willing as you can be to stand a friend to Neighbour Gray's daughter; and having been apprised of her unfortunate situation, have already given her the best law advice to be had for money. I have ascertained that she has nothing to fear. There is no evidence against her. She *must* be acquitted; and the only thing to be done for her future comfort, is to take a passage for her at once to America, as it will be impossible for her to live in peace at home, after what has happened. In the mean time, all I have to beg of you, my dear Welland, is to forbear

all discussion of the subject till we meet again, when I shall explain matters to your satisfaction. Not a syllable more by letter!"

Frank Welland *did* refrain from further correspondence with the friend he had detected as a villain; but not from the most zealous interference in behalf of Mary. At the risk of eternally offending his uncle, who had occasional glimpses of memory and consciousness, he resolved to set off for Nottingham; but, at the very moment of departure, old Welland experienced a second stroke of palsy, which, within twenty-four hours, terminated his existence; and scarcely had the old man breathed his last, when Frank, disdaining to inquire for a will or after the disposal of the property, left the dead to bury their dead, mounted his uncle's favourite mare, and rode off, like a madman, to Nottingham. The assizes had commenced the preceding day; the trial of Mary Gray was actually before the grand jury, when Frank Welland, half dead with emotion and exhaustion, entered the court. For the first time after nearly two years' absence, he beheld his gentle, sensitive Mary standing, wild and ghastly, at the bar, holding up her hand to plead for

life, against the advocate of the laws of her country !—

But the opinion of the able counsellors procured by William Harding, was fully borne out. A deficiency of evidence secured the acquittal of the prisoner; and she was received from the bar, insensible, into the friendly arms of Francis Welland. *He*, indeed, entertained no further doubt of her innocence; but Mary did not leave the court with an unblemished reputation. She had not attempted to deny the birth of the child, but proved that she had confided the fact to others, so as to receive professional attendance; and, though her life was thus preserved from the retribution of the law, her character was gone for ever.

"And what is to become of you, Mary?" demanded Frank, as he watched by her side, when at length she woke from the heavy slumber into which she had fallen, after being conducted by her devoted friend to an obscure inn at Nottingham, where he obtained her shelter for the night. "Shall you have courage to show your face at Falkstone? My uncle is lying dead at the farm. I must hasten back to do my duty by

him. If you wish it, I will carry you home. It seems to me you have no alternative but to go back to your mother."

"I must wait his orders," replied the humbled girl, in a low voice.

"Whose orders must you wait?"

"My husband's!"

"Your husband's? — you do not mean to pretend that you are married?"

"I am married," replied Mary, mildly. "And if I had not known yesterday that nothing could be proved against an innocent person, I might have set aside the trial at once, for I was indicted under my maiden name."

"And why, for God's sake, did you not put in the plea?"

"Because the discovery of our marriage would have been the ruin of my husband. Such has been throughout the motive of so much mystery. My little boy was taken away the moment he was born, and every means has been resorted to, to keep the secret. What have I not borne for it!—Disgrace, imprisonment, danger! and, above all, the wretchedness of knowing the sorrow I had brought down on my mother—on my poor, dear,

kind, loving mother !—Oh, Master Frank ! I will not wait here any longer. Take me back to Falkstone !—take me back to my mother !—take me *home !*"

" In defiance of your *husband*, Mary ?" sternly demanded Welland, who, in this softening of the poor girl's heart, felt he had an opportunity for the clearing up of his doubts.

" Why should I think more of *him* than he thinks of *me?*" cried Mary. " Why was he not, like yourself, in court, to give me courage and countenance !—He promised to come down for the trial. He promised to be in readiness to receive me when all was over."

" To *come down !*—from London perhaps ?" demanded Frank, fixing his eye upon the countenance of the agitated girl. " Mary ! it cannot, surely, be William Harding who has deceived you ?"—

Mary turned paler than before, but uttered not a word.

" What is the alleged motive of this husband of yours," persisted Frank, " for so obstinate a concealment of his marriage ?"

" That he would be instantly cast off by a rela-

tive from whom he has great expectations. What right have I to ruin his prospects in life? The moment he comes into his business, all is to be made known,—our boy acknowledged, and our marriage declared."

"Mary!" cried Frank Welland, "it is no longer possible for me to doubt that the villain who has all but brought you to a death of shame, is no other than William Harding. Do not deny it—do not attempt to deceive me or yourself. I tell you that, at this very moment, he is married to another. The business and fortune he was expecting, were the wedding portion of his cousin."

Mary smiled incredulously. "I am lawfully married—believe me, I am lawfully married!"—was her sole reply.

"Not if your supposed husband be William Harding," persisted Frank, with solemn earnestness; and, taking from his pocket-book the letter announcing William's approaching marriage with Sophia, he placed this irrefragable proof in the hands of his companion. But Mary was no scholar. She begged him to read to her what he supposed to concern her of the epistle; and the

horror-struck countenance with which she listened to every successive line, gradually unfolding the miseries of her fate and the worthlessness of him in whom she trusted, afforded eloquent confirmation of Welland's previous suspicions. She sat for some moments silent, after he had concluded the letter; then replied by producing for his inspection what she believed to be the legal certificate of a legal marriage, privately solemnized at Nottingham the preceding summer.

"He has deceived you, Mary," cried Frank, returning her the papers. "This is mere imposition—this is good for nothing.—The marriage was a trick,—an imposture."—

It was useless to add more. Mary, who had supported her courage so well at the bar of criminal justice, was now senseless at his feet.

A week elapsed—and Frank Welland had laid in the grave the venerable head of the relative by whose will he came into possession of property to the value of twelve thousand pounds; and a spectral figure sat by the fireside of Neighbour Gray, whose door was now closed more scrupulously than before against the consolatory visits of her village friends. Overwhelmed by the dis-

covery of the infamous deception practised upon her, poor Mary refused to be comforted. One moment, she burst into invectives against her seducer, threatening to set off for London and bring his villanies to light;—the next, she seemed to shrink from the contemplation of the act of cruel justice she was about to inflict upon the worthless being so steadfastly beloved; and finding from young Welland that he was about to visit London to wind up his commercial affairs and dispose of his business, preparatory to retiring to Falkstone for the remainder of his days, she placed her cause in his hands, charging him to claim back from William Harding the pledge of now withered affection; and engage, on her part, to institute no proceedings against him, in consideration of his consenting to give her back the child.

Her commission was more than fulfilled by the young farmer. Armed with the sternness of righteous indignation, he proceeded to the house of feasting, over whose front the name of the happy bridegroom was now triumphantly inscribed in letters of gold; and, having refused the hand extended towards him in friendly greeting by

young Harding, repeated, word by word, the adjurations of the unfortunate daughter of Neighbour Gray.

"Hush, hush!—speak lower, I entreat you," said the delinquent, turning pale as death at the mere mention of Mary's name. "I can explain everything; I can——"

"You can explain *nothing!*" replied Welland, with firmness. "You have acted like a scoundrel, and your guilt will only be increased by denial.—I know not how far your proceedings may have brought you within reach of the criminal justice of the country; but this I know, that, in spite of all your prosperity, all your pride, this thriving business of yours would fall away to nothing, were I to proclaim what you have done and what you have intended to do."

"Welland, my dear Welland!"—faltered Harding, going anxiously to the door of the room in which they were standing, to ascertain that the listening ears of Gabriel Wilkinson were not on the watch. "For old friendship's sake, be merciful!—Dictate your own terms—I am willing to do Mary Gray all the justice still in my power.

I will make a comfortable settlement upon her and her mother."

"Neither her mother nor she would stoop to receive a shilling at your hands!"—replied Frank, with contempt. "All this poor girl asks of you, is possession of her child."

"And that is the sole request beyond my power to grant," replied Harding. "The boy died within ten days of removal from his mother. —I can give you the certificate of his burial."

"*Another* forged certificate?"—demanded Welland, with a scornful smile.

"No, on my honour!"—

"Your *honour!*"—

"On my word as a man and a Christian. Here it is," he continued, having unlocked and taken from his bureau a paper, which Welland recognized as in proper form. "Take it down to Mary. Set her mind at rest on that point. Make my peace with her, as far as peace is possible; and, whenever she will accept assistance at my hands, *you* shall dictate the settlement to be made upon her."

"*I shall,* but it will never proceed from funds

of yours, replied Welland, impatiently. "There is but one concession I require of you—namely, a written engagement to attempt, on no future occasion, or on whatever pretext, any further communication with the family of Neighbour Gray."

"That is easily granted," replied Harding, readily taking up his pen to comply with the demand, in hopes that his compliance would rid him of the company of his dangerous visitor. "Here is my attestation, which you may sign as a witness, though I cannot exactly perceive what interest you have in such an agreement."

It was not to the culprit before him that Welland felt bound to enter into explanations. It was by the humble hearthside of Neighbour Gray that the young farmer unfolded, for the first time, to the weeping Mary, his desire to make her his wife; a match that would not only secure her happiness for life, but, in a great measure, procure her vindication in the eyes of the world, and at the expense of his own character. Those who were aware of Frank Welland's inability to declare Mary his wife during the lifetime of his uncle, would attribute to *him* the evil that had

befallen her, and the suspicions to which she had been on the point of falling a victim.

But, to the grief of Frank, and the amazement of Neighbour Gray, Mary was inexorable !—She was not going to carry shame, she said, into any honest man's homestead. Nor could even the utmost eloquence of Welland convince her of the authenticity of the certificate he had brought from London. Mary felt how grievously she had been already misled by her want of scholarship ; and, once deceived, could not bring herself to believe that the paltry slip of paper was anything more than a new feint to impose upon her. The mother—the young mother—was yearning in her heart. The first cry of her infant had sounded in her ears only to be silenced for ever ; and, though now proved a child of shame, she felt that, if only permitted to fold her little son to her breast, all would be atoned—all might be forgotten :—her withered youth,—her blighted fame,—her broken heart. Even the fixed sadness of her mother's venerable countenance would be dispelled, after bestowing her benediction upon the precious child of her precious Mary.

Again and again—sometimes with entreaties,

sometimes with chiding—did Welland labour to undeceive her. He resigned his own views, he forgot his own passion, while striving to restore the composure of the unhappy girl. But the more earnestly he protested, the more convinced was Mary that he was bent on persuading her of the death of the babe in order that, finding herself alone in the world, she might consent to become his wife, and resign all recollection of the past. She slept not by night, she rested not by day. Had it not been for the friendly aid of Farmer Welland, Neighbour Gray must have come to want; for the old woman was no longer able, nor her daughter willing to work. A spirit of restlessness, induced by her misfortunes, and almost amounting to insanity, seemed to have taken possession of poor Mary.

Unable to address a letter of appeal to her persecutor, and faithful to her resolution of confiding the secret so momentous to William's welfare to no other living soul, the devoted girl set about learning to write; and, in the course of a few months, so far accomplished her object as to be able to frame a petition to Harding, embodying the requests already conveyed through the

hands of Francis Welland. But, after all her patience, all her cares, all her labours, her letter was in a few days returned to her without a syllable of reply. Such was William Harding's mode of fulfilling the written engagement into which he had entered with his friend.

Two years had now elapsed since his marriage; and, though many men might have felt the evil to which his misdoings had given rise a drawback upon their happiness, nothing could exceed the triumphant pride of William Harding. Sophia had already made him the father of a boy, upon whom, at his birth, the grandfather settled a sum of 10,000*l.*; and, to complete his satisfaction, Welland, the only individual in London cognizant of his guilt, had retired for life into a remote county. Harding was now a Common-Councilman, with a prospect of civic honours, pending which accession of importance he gratified his vanity by the re-adornment and extension of his premises in Cheapside. His shining, French-varnished mahogany counters, the large looking-glasses advantageously disposed for the reflection of light, the arabesque garlands adorning the pannels of the shop, the ormolu sconces, emitting long tongues

of lucent gas—all were arranged according to the most approved form of modern luxury. Rich India shawls, and silks of Lyons manufacture, were disposed in folds and draperies, imparting to the place the air of a lady's boudoir, rather than of a shop in Cheapside; while vases of enamelled Nankin porcelain, birds of Paradise, and pagodas of carved ivory or filigree, were interposed among his merceries, after the fashion of an India warehouse. Of this exhibition of taste and splendour, William Harding was vastly proud; and when the old gentleman drove in, once or twice a week, from his villa at Camberwell, to dine with the young couple and admire the progress of his grandson, though he was apt to jeer and banter his successor upon his tendency to parade, he was, at heart, pleased to perceive that his son-in-law marched with the times, and had spirit to adventure further than himself. The business was daily rising in importance.—Harding and Co. realised more in six months than John Harding alone, in twelve; nor could the old gentleman refrain from pointing out occasionally to Gabriel Wilkinson, as he passed through the shop, how many sources of profit had been neglected in his

time, and how much of their present prosperity was owing to the sharp head and high character of his son-in-law. William would come to be church-warden of the parish,—William would come to be Alderman,—William *might* come to be Lord Mayor;—William would, at all events, come into possession of the sixty-five thousand pounds amassed by his father-in-law. Sophy was the happiest of wives—the boy a princely child:—had not old John Harding cause to applaud his choice of a son, and William the price he had set upon an unblemished reputation?—

The only drawback on his satisfaction was some degree of incompatibility of temper with his flighty wife. Mrs Harding, so far from possessing the gentleness and devotedness of his once idolized Mary, was a young woman of haughty spirit, educated at a third-rate boarding-school, in considerable admiration of her own heiress-ship. She knew the prosperity of her husband to emanate solely from herself, and made use of the argument, on all occasions, to enforce her claims to consideration and indulgence. She was alike jealous of her husband's attention to his business in preference to herself, and jealous of

her husband's influence over her father as superior to her own. She was often fretful, always imperious. But William felt that, for the present, it was desirable to bear all with submission. It was necessary, till the death of old Harding, to maintain, in the eyes of his father-in-law, the reputation of the best of husbands.

One day, as the old gentleman was enjoying, in his daughter's drawing-room, the basin of smoking soup which William always took care to have in readiness for his visits, a sort of scuffle was heard at the door—an altercation between William and the nurse, who was for pushing into the room with the child. "I don't care, sir," reached the ears of Mrs Harding and her father. "I know that woman will end with doing Master John a mischief. She shan't touch the child whilst he's in *my* care. I choose to go to my Missus——"

"Come in, nurse—come in!" cried Sophy, advancing towards the door; but the sovereign, silently slipped by William into nurse's hand, had produced a total confusion of ideas in the woman's mind. When interrogated by "Missus,"

she knew nothing—could remember nothing; and flattered herself she had succeeded in persuading the jealous woman that her ears had deceived her.

But Sophia was too shrewd to be so imposed on. She had always secretly resented William's coldness as a suitor and indifference as a husband; and now so perseveringly addressed her questions to Gabriel Wilkinson, concerning the disturbance which had driven the nurse and child from the shop into the drawing-room, as at length to elicit that a young woman in deep mourning, having considerable remains of beauty, had more than once pursued the nurse and child into the house —claimed the boy as her own—upbraided William Harding, in presence of his shopmen and customers,—and only been driven at length from the place by threats of sending for peace-officers.

"The young woman is evidently out of her mind," observed Wilkinson, watching the effect of his communications. "But the tender way in which she appeals to her dear William, and the earnestness with which she insists upon getting possession of the little boy, are truly alarming; for, I fear, they have been already the means of raising reports in the neighbourhood disadvan-

tageous to Mr Harding. Twice, the vehemence of her outcries has attracted a mob round the shop-door; and I can perceive officious people, as they pass, pointing to the house as the scene of a mysterious occurrence."

"And have you not been able to discover the girl's name?"—demanded Sophia, her heart fluttering with agitation.

"No, ma'am. It was no business of mine. But I think I have heard Mr Harding address her as 'Mary.' I fancy it is some acquaintance from the country."

This hint was enough for the petulant Sophia. Much as she had before affected to despise the shop, she was now constantly visiting William at his counter, with his boy in her arms; nay, would even stand with him at the door, on pretence of amusing the child with the carriages passing by. Harding, meanwhile, was on thorns. Significant smiles passed between his envious shopmen, Wilkinson and Clark, when they saw their master, in his uneasiness, bringing down to his customers plush for velvet, or china crape for aërophane. But at length, Sophia's manœuvres succeeded; —she obtained an interview with "Mary."

For it was indeed Mary Gray—Mary, care-crazed and friendless,—who, having paid the last duties to her mother and realized a small sum by the sale of her cottage and effects, had repaired to London on pretext of seeking a situation; but, in reality, on the frantic errand of persuading William Harding to give up her child. Her mind was more than ever bewildered by delusions; and, having readily found her way to the residence of the splendid mercer, she could not dispossess herself of the idea that the beautiful boy she saw laughing and crowing in his nurse's arms, in a shop inscribed with the name of "William Harding," could be no other than the one of whom she was in search.

"Give him to me!"—cried she, rushing into the shop on the memorable afternoon Sophia was lying in wait for her. "He is mine—he is my child!—William will tell you that he was married to me before he ever saw your face!—But I do not ask for William—I do not want William!—I want the child—I want our son—our boy!"—

"Put her quietly out," said Harding in an under tone to Gabriel Wilkinson; "the poor creature is evidently mad." But the paleness

overspreading his own features, and the faltering voice in which he spoke, bore testimony to his secret terrors.

"Do not hurt her—she seems quite harmless," cried Sophia, interfering, as Wilkinson was about to obey the directions of his master. "Do you want anything here, young woman?"—she continued, addressing Mary Gray.

"I want my child!"—replied Mary, more gently, on finding herself addressed in a tone of gentleness. "William Harding took it from me the moment it was born, promising I should have it again when he was able to acknowledge our marriage. And now, though you see how dearly he loves it, and how finely it is dressed, he keeps it from me on pretence that it is dead and buried!"—And she attempted, with so much vehemence, to snatch the babe from the arms of its mother, that Sophia, terrified in her turn, was glad to escape into the interior of the house.

The rest of that day was anything but a day of peace to William. All that female exasperation could put forth in the way of reproach, was lavished upon him. He was accused by Sophy

of having redeemed himself from beggary by a marriage with herself, to the ruin of some unhappy creature sacrificed to his interests; and already she had addressed a letter to her father, acquainting him with her discoveries, and imploring him to fetch her away from the city the following day. Overwhelmed by the prospect of a breach with his father-in-law, Harding exerted himself to the utmost to "put the best face on the matter," taxing his wife with injustice in giving ear to the incoherences of one who was either a maniac or a person suborned to bring false accusations against an innocent man. By the time tea was nearly over, he had so far recovered his influence over the mind of the indignant Sophy as to be permitted to sit beside her on the sofa, and obtain a remote prospect of reconciliation.

But Mary Gray—who, though expelled with rough entreatment that morning from the threshold of her once loved William, felt that she had obtained an advantage in being permitted to approach the child whom her disordered intellects represented to her as her own—was still lurking near the shop; and, when the business of the day

was ended, and, by the light of the blazing gas gleaming through the transparent plate glass, she discerned Clark, Wilkinson, and their confraternity, busily engaged in making entries and folding up the rich cachemere and Ternau shawls, she made a sudden dart across the shop, towards the door through which she had seen Sophia disappear in the morning. In another moment, she was in the drawing-room; confronting, with frantic gestures, the husband and wife, and interrupting their *tête-à-tête* with outcries for her child,—her boy.—

"He is dead, Mary," cried William Harding, startled out of all self-possession by her sudden reappearance. "You have seen the certificate of his burial. You well *know* that he is dead."

"Then you have murdered him. I accuse you of having murdered him!"—exclaimed the poor girl, her face livid with excitement. "You tried hard to betray *me* to the gallows, in hopes of getting rid of me. I tell you, William Harding, you tried to make away with *me;* and now you have made away with your poor, blessed, innocent, smiling babe. What have you done with it, madam? —where have you put it?"—cried she, making a wild rush towards the now shrieking Sophia,

which was parried by the agitated husband; and, as they were struggling together, the young men below, alarmed by the screams of Mrs Harding, hurried up stairs. The window was thrown up, and the police called in. Ere they made their appearance, Mary, exhausted by her efforts, and the disease by which they were excited, had fallen on the floor in a fit—her lips covered with foam, and her eyes starting from their orbits.

"Take her away, take her away!" shrieked Mrs Harding, as the policemen entered; while her husband remained speechless with consternation.

"She is mad, I fancy,"—observed one of the shopmen, in explanation.

"More likely drunk," replied the policemen, to whom such incidents were familiar.

"Drunk and disorderly,"—added Clark, after representing to the policemen the strange intrusion of the offender, whom he proceeded to give in charge, with a view of putting an end to the dilemma of his employer.

"I warrant you a few hours in the station-house will bring the lady to herself," replied the man. And the still senseless Mary was accord-

ingly borne off, conveyed to the station-house, and locked into a damp cell till morning. William Harding had no leisure for the consideration of her sufferings—Sophia's hysterics were quite as much, just then, as he could manage.

Two hours afterwards, just as the house was closed for the night, a knock was heard, followed by the voice of a stranger, insisting on an immediate interview with Mr Harding. It was Welland; who, having followed the unfortunate daughter of Neighbour Gray to town, had only that afternoon traced out her lodgings, and, alarmed by her absence, and conjecturing whither the wanderings of the poor maniac had been directed, was come to demand tidings of the unhappy girl. William would, perhaps, have followed up his system of deception by denying all knowledge of her, had not the servants of the house already admitted to the visitor, that a young woman, out of her mind, had, in truth, been there; and, having bred disturbances in the family, was committed to the nearest police station.

Frank Welland did not waste a moment in appealing to the conscience of his former friend.

Hastening eagerly to the station-house, by dint of a considerable bribe, he obtained immediate access to the prisoner.

"She be som'ere her'abouts. But the young woman war blind drunk when shut in for the night," observed the constable, lowering his lantern to the floor of the cell on which Mary Gray was lying. "She war obstropulous when we took her into custody; but she do seem quiet enough now."

And quiet enough she was, when Frank, with streaming eyes, bent over her body.—Mary was dead!—Yes, dead,—still warm, but quite dead.—

"There didn't seem no good in sending for a doctor," observed the policeman, in self-extenuation. "She war given in charge as drunk and disorderly. How was we to know as she war in a fit?"

"Given in charge?—by whom?" faltered Welland.

"By a respectable householder, Mr William Harding, of Cheapside. There ben't a gemman of higher character in the parish."

The unfortunate daughter of Neighbour Gray was laid decently in the grave, by him over whose

infancy the good woman had watched so kindly. But the prosperity, to the acquirement of which William Harding had sacrificed so largely, did not long outlast the sad event. The wrongs of poor Mary were avenged by the vindictive Sophia; who, till her father's death, remained his inmate, and, by her representations of the worthlessness of her husband, obtained the sole and separate control over the property left behind by old Harding.

No one pitied the delinquent—no one stood his friend. His gorgeous shop became deserted; and the failing business was, at length, made over, for a trifling consideration, to a new firm, Messrs Wilkinson and Clark. The ruined man, true to the last to his false principles, instead of attributing to his misdoings the failure of his worldly prosperity, bewailed only his loss of reputation.—

"I had no chance of getting over such a stroke of ill-luck!" — was his constant exclamation. "Knowledge of business is a fine thing; but my case is a plain proof that, in trade, the one thing needful is CHARACTER!"

THE JEWESS.

THE vogue recently assigned by literary confederacy to the "Spas of Germany" and "Brunnens of Nassau" has been productive of numberless unforeseen results. Tunbridge Wells and Malvern are drooping; and more than one jolly citizen, accustomed aforetime to refresh himself with an autumnal trip to Ramsgate or Hastings, has extended his travels across the main, and died of sauerkraut and the spleen.

Fooling it among the rest, I arrived at Emmsbaden last year, the first week in September,—setting out on a journey just as the rains set in. Nothing could be more cheerless than the aspect of the little valley. The Lahn ran heavy in its

channel, and time as heavy as the Lahn. Reasonable people had abandoned the place; and nothing remained but a *coterie* of discontented English, astonished to find that the green curtain had fallen, when they expected to be in time for the overture. It was perhaps owing to the want of better amusement, that one and all selected me as auditor of their several versions of an adventure which, towards the close of the season, had produced an unprecedented sensation in the place. In the course of the three days I remained at Emms, I continued to sum up the various editions of the story. But, in order to excite as strong an interest for the catastrophe as was expressed by my fair countrywomen (who, but for the timely incident, might have perished of *ennui*), it will be necessary to begin (like the *Bélier*, in the fairy tale) with the beginning.

It was on the day succeeding Mr Clifton's arrival in town, after a dreary winter in Ireland, that he was invited to a splendid *fête*, given by four rich and idle bachelors, at a villa on the banks of the Thames. Walter Clifton was a guest eminently worthy the entertainment. — Handsome, well-born, and accomplished, he had recently

"come to his estate," which happened to lie in one of the disturbed districts of the green island which seems bent upon eternally proving its greenness. His mother, a widow-lady of somewhat serious turn, resided in Dublin, where his youth and college vacations were chiefly passed; so that Clifton had none of the knowingness, nothing of the jargon, of a London man. There are certain branches of useless knowledge and phrases of fashionable slang, with which Eton, Harrow, or Westminster, renders the schoolboy as familiar as the most dowagerly of dowager dandies. But Walter's mind and conversation were pure from all this. He arrived in town a brilliant, animated, happy, sanguine creature; ready to be amused, willing to amuse; with truth on his lips and sunshine in his heart. When his Christ Church friend, Sir Robert Walmsley, offered him a ticket for the *fête*, he thought himself particularly lucky; and, much to the amazement of the dandy baronet, who from affectation could scarcely allow himself to inhale the common air breathed by the rest of mankind, candidly admitted his delight.

"I'm afraid you will be cursedly bored," was Sir Robert's apostrophe, on bestowing the ticket.

"I never was bored in my life," was Clifton's frank reply; "and should think it a reflection on myself, not to be gratified at Ashbrook Farm."

With feelings attuned to enjoyment, therefore, he turned his cabriolet into the Fulham road, as the bright midsummer morning subsided into a delicious afternoon; and when, from a distance, he caught the sound of the military band enlivening the *fête*, his light heart felt lighter than ever, and he quickened his horse's speed towards the gates. As it usually happens where superfluous precautions are taken to secure the order of the day, disorder ensued. Such a superabundance of policemen were stationed in the vicinity of the spot to protect the plate and other valuable property contributed by the lordly *fête*-givers, that, having nothing else to do, they did mischief,—hectored the footmen in attendance, and set the coachmen squabbling with each other and slashing their horses. A London coachman is an animal peculiarly insubordinate to constituted authorities.

There was one white-wigged, red-faced, irascible old gentleman, proceeding to the Ashbrook *fête*, who, on being reproved for impatience (which was in fact the impatience of a pair of spirited blood horses), whipped out of the line, produced a considerable smashing of panels, and eventually arrived at the gate with a policeman at each of his horses' heads;—his brother whips cheering him on, the rabble shouting and swearing,—the policemen looking wondrous blue, and the two ladies in the handsome chariot he was driving, as pale as ashes.

The latter circumstance naturally excited the sympathy of Walter Clifton. He was out of his cab in a moment; offering his aid to hasten them out of the carriage, now surrounded by a noisy, struggling multitude, among which the gentry in office were indiscriminately dealing their blows. To escort them through the throng, was the work of a moment; but it was not till they had arrived at an inner entrance, where shawls were deposited and tickets given, he had leisure to note that the elder of the two ladies was attired with unusual costliness, and the younger scarcely less lavishly adorned with the gifts of nature. Both were

warmly welcomed by the hospitable heroes of the day, with whom Clifton was unacquainted; and though his unknown friends turned towards him with eager acknowledgments, he had the mortification of being without the means of a formal introduction. It *was* a mortification; for the dark-haired girl who smiled upon him while her chaperon was pouring out her thanks, was one of the handsomest creatures he had ever beheld; with dark oriental eyes, the most graceful form, the most buoyant demeanour!—His sense of propriety scarcely sufficed to remind him that, till he had been introduced in form, there would be want of delicacy in presuming upon an acquaintance thus accidentally formed; and it was with some difficulty he tore himself from the contemplation of that fine intelligent countenance, to go in search of a master of the ceremonies.

"My dear Walmsley," cried he, the moment he caught a glimpse of Sir Robert, "can you tell me who it is that drives a very dark chariot with bay horses?"

"Everybody drives a dark chariot with bay horses," drawled the dandy, trying to pass on.

"With white liveries?"

"My dear fellow, I know nobody—I never notice liveries."

"But you surely notice beautiful faces; and——"

"I like beautiful faces to notice *me*. But pray excuse me. The duchess is waiting for me to take her in to breakfast."

Equally unsuccessful were divers other applications. Nobody listened—nobody cared—nobody knew anything about anybody. It is probable, however, that the objects of his inquiry succeeded on *their* part in ascertaining *his* name and condition; for as he stood overlooking a quadrille, in which one or two of his friends were engaged, the elder lady, approaching with her fair companion on her arm, addressed him with so much graciousness, that in the flurry of spirits excited by the animating scene, and almost before he knew what he was about, he engaged the beauty as a partner for the following dance.

All now went smoothly—more smoothly than his rashness deserved. They stood together,—danced together, — talked together, — smiled together. Clifton readily discovered that his companion was a person moving in the best society, and commanding

its courtesies; and, with characteristic frankness, made her acquainted with his whole history in return. Having loitered a few minutes near his fair partner, after returning her to the protection of her chaperon, he discovered that they were mother and daughter, and that the name of the latter was Rachel;—a homely designation, but when people are in the humour to be pleased, nothing comes amiss. To remain long by her side, however, was impossible. The ladies were too popular to be accessible to his assiduities. Rachel was beset with partners, and Rachel's mamma by half the fashionable dowagers of the day.

Meanwhile, the *fête* proceeded with unprecedented brilliancy. It was a delicious day, and the lovely lawns of Ashbrook Farm were worthy of the weather. Every impression received by Clifton was agreeable, and tended to increase his hilarity. Never had he passed so enchanting a morning; and by the time that evening brought the *fête* to a close, and amid the crackling and sputtering of fireworks, his cousin, Lady Armagh, presented him in form to the ladies of the dark chariot and bay horses, as—"Mrs De Bruyn, Mr

Clifton—Mr Clifton, Mrs and Miss De Bruyn," he had ceased to care about the ceremony. Accident had brought them together, and inclination kept them together nearly the whole of the day. —They were already intimate.

At the opera the following night, nothing was so easy as for Mr Clifton to visit Mrs De Bruyn's box; at the Zoological next day, nothing so charming as to walk by Rachel's side. Finding that they were to be at Almack's and all the best balls of the ensuing week, he took measures for meeting them; and though they were on all occasions surrounded by the most fashionable men in town, Miss De Bruyn usually managed to make room for his approach. She evidently preferred his society. While he worshipped her beauty, Rachel evidently delighted in his frank, cordial character.

Amid the tittle-tattle of second-rate society, Walter Clifton would not have been a week acquainted with the De Bruyns, without learning every particular of their birth, parentage, and education—the name of Mrs De B.'s great-grandmother, and the amount of the value of her diamonds. But among those with whom they

mutually associated, everybody is supposed to know everybody; because all are persons concerning whom everything is known. In process of time, Mrs De Bruyn invited Walter to her house in Berkeley square; where he was presented to a Mr John De Bruyn, a young man whom he took to be the son and brother of his friends. By the whole family, he was cordially welcomed. He found them living in opulence. His beautiful Rachel displayed every accomplishment of a first-rate education; and he felt himself fortunate in having accidentally made his way into a domestic circle, which he was beginning to flatter himself might eventually become his own. With the exception of certain harsh peculiarities of manner on the part of the mother, there was nothing he could wish altered in the family.

A man less ingenuous than Walter Clifton, might in fact have been easily captivated by the attractions of such a girl as Rachel. There was a nobleness and high-mindedness in her sentiments, peculiarly consonant with the lofty beauty of her person. Of all the women he had ever heard converse, not one approached her in unstudied eloquence, in information, in correctness of taste

and judgment. He could no longer bear to talk with other girls. It was not alone the liquid lustre of her dark eyes,—the speaking expression of her finely-formed mouth, which thrilled through his soul when he gazed upon her intelligent face. It was that he believed in her preference; that she conversed with him far more unreservedly than with any other man of her acquaintance; and he only trembled lest he might injure his cause by precipitancy, so difficult was it to restrain himself from declaring in form to Mrs De Bruyn his desire to be admitted as a suitor to her daughter. He felt that six weeks' acquaintance could not justify such a pretension; and contented himself with writing to his Irish man of business for a formal statement of the nature and condition of his property, that he might be prepared to meet the inquiries likely to arise on his proposals.

Such was the happy state of Clifton's feelings while daily engaged in escorting the lady of his thoughts to exhibitions, picnics, water-parties, breakfasts, reviews; dancing with her at every ball, and sitting entranced by her side at every opera. No objection was formed to his attentions. John De Bruyn, a dull, sullen young man, was in

constant attendance on his sister, and on excellent terms with her admirer; and though their conversation was usually carried on in whispers, the slightest word of which from Rachel's lips reached the inmost recesses of the heart of Clifton, neither mother, nor brother, nor any one present, could be unobservant of their increasing intimacy.

One morning, the young lover, calling at an earlier hour than usual in Berkeley square, and finding Mrs De Bruyn alone, naturally inquired for her daughter.

"Rachel is gone to sit for her picture," was the reply.

"Her picture!—to whom?—Who, *who* will do her justice?" cried Clifton, eagerly.

"Drummond, I hope. The sketch promises extremely well. John saw it yesterday, and was delighted."

"The picture is intended then for a present to Mr De Bruyn?"—observed Walter.

No, it is for myself. I shall want it as a remembrance when she is gone. Rachel will leave it with me on her marriage."

Clifton coloured deeply. The allusion appeared too explicit to be mistaken; and he was beginning

to inquire of himself whether it might not be intended as a spur to his tardy explanations, when Mrs De Bruyn calmly added, "Rachel's marriage takes place, you know, in August."

"Her marriage?"—

"I trust John has given you an invitation in form?"

Walter Clifton trembled from head to foot, as he inquired, with assumed composure, what happy man Miss De Bruyn was about to honour with her hand. The mother regarded him with unfeigned surprise.

"It is surely impossible you can be unaware," said she, "that Rachel is about to marry her cousin John?—The terms of the late Mr De Bruyn's will (thanks to the officiousness of the newspapers) were made so very public, that I fancied all the world acquainted with my daughter's engagement, which has existed from her birth. It was, in fact, the only method by which poor Mr De Bruyn could concentrate the affairs of his house. John will henceforward assume the sole control of the business. Among families of our persuasion, such alliances are common."

"*Persuasion? — business?*" — Yes! Walter

Clifton began to understand it all!—Rachel was doubtless the daughter of the great Jewish banker De Bruyn, defunct a few years before, the details of whose will had occupied three columns per day of the morning papers for nearly a week. He ought to have remembered all this—he ought to have inquired—he ought to have known, or rather, people ought to have warned him!—Yet why, or wherefore?—Was it not tacitly understood that all London, from the Regent's Park to St James's, was familiar with the fortunes of the great heiress, the only daughter of the most eminent of Jewish bankers?

Luckily for Walter, the announcement of a visitor at that moment afforded him an opportunity of escape from the house; and his horse being in waiting at the door, he galloped many miles into the country, before the stunning effects of the blow he had received in the slightest degree subsided.

His first impulse was to quit London that very night; *not* for Ireland, — for only the preceding day he had dispatched a letter to his mother explanatory of his happy expectations, and he had not courage to expose himself to the old lady's questions and condolences.—No! he would go

abroad — to Turkey — Egypt — the East;—no matter where, so that he might escape all recurrence to the origin of his wretchedness!—On Rachel De Bruyn he never wished to look again. One of the weaknesses of his moral nature was an antipathy to Jews and all relating to them; and even were the prejudice surmounted, this member of the tribe—this one—*this Jewess*—had done him a deliberate injury—had triumphed, for her wanton amusement, over his affections.—No!—he never wished to look on Rachel De Bruyn again!—

On his return towards London, however, calmer feelings ensued. Though still determined to fly from England, he resolved, ere his departure, to indulge in a last view of that which was so eminently lovely, as if for the purpose of engraving still more indelibly in his bosom, the image of its false idol. He could trust himself to look upon her without self-betrayal. He possessed an all-potent antidote to the power of her charms—to the magic of her voice.—*She was a Jewess!*—

According to previous engagement, they were to meet and dance together that evening, at one of the finest *fêtes* of the season. He would go—he

would confront her,—he would fix his eyes for the last time upon the future Mrs John De Bruyn.

From the smiling self-possession with which she accosted him, Clifton inferred with truth that his emotion of the morning had passed unnoticed by her mother. No suspicions were excited. They might part as calmly as they had met. Rachel should never know the anguish she had inflicted;—never learn that he had quitted her with a breaking heart to bid an eternal farewell to the country wherein she abided. He began, therefore, to talk with indifference on indifferent subjects; and unsuspicious that any peculiar agitation was labouring in his breast, the lovely girl readily accepted his arm, to make the tour of the illuminated gardens of —— House. At length, they sat down together, still talking with levity and smiling with unconcern; till, after gazing in silence a moment or two upon the beautiful contour of her half-averted face, Clifton suddenly gave way to an uncontrolled burst of passionate exclamation. "No!—it cannot have proceeded from inadvertence!" cried he. "You *must* have been aware of the cruel injury you were inflicting! —you *must* have seen how blindly I fell into an

error, the results of which are to cleave to me as a curse for evermore !"—

Believing her companion to be attacked by sudden frenzy, Rachel started up, and proposed returning to her mother. But Clifton did not stir, and the tears now slowly rolling down his face appealed so forcibly to her sympathy, that, without uttering a syllable, she sat down again by his side.

"You cannot have been insensible to your influence over me," he resumed, in a broken voice; "and knowing the insuperable obstacles between us, why—why encourage my attachment for the wanton indulgence of a vanity which has withered every prospect of my life !"——

"Obstacles ?—attachment ?" exclaimed Rachel, in grief and surprise, overpowered by the fervour of his address. "Dear Mr Clifton, with what have you to reproach me ? From the moment of your considerate kindness to us at Ashbrook, you have been welcomed with warm friendship to our house. You must have seen how much we preferred your society—how truly flattered we were by your preference of ours."

"Then why not explain at once the impossibility of the expectations I was forming?"—

"Expectations?"—

"Of making you my wife—my own—my beloved and loving household companion!"—

Rachel grew pale as she listened to this earnest apostrophe.

"You cannot have meditated this," said she, at length, in a tremulous voice. "The difference of religion——"

"I knew it not—I guessed it not!"—

"Yet our name — our well-known connections——"

"I saw nothing but your beauty—your excellence. I asked nothing—I cared for nothing—but to be near you, still and ever near you—near you as now, when, gazing for the last time upon your face, I feel that my earthly happiness is crushed for ever. Rachel! you *must* have seen that I loved you!"—

"You did but offer me, in a more marked degree, the attention I have been in the habit of receiving from others; who, aware of my faith, my family, my betrothment to my cousin, show

me the attention due to my age, sex, and position in society."

"And has there been nothing then in your own feelings towards me, to war against your happiness in the state into which you are now about to enter?—You have a colder heart than I imagined!"—cried Walter Clifton.

"My cousin is no less partial to you than my mother and myself. I have always hoped our friendship would continue after my marriage," pleaded Miss De Bruyn, accustomed from childhood to regard the tie of wedlock as part of the ceremony of social life.

"Your cousin!"—exclaimed Clifton. "Did you imagine that your *husband* would remain equally insensible to my passionate idolatry?"

"I never thought—I never considered. I have lived with John De Bruyn on the happiest terms so long as I can remember," faltered Rachel. "Why should he begin to thwart me, and interfere with my preferences, on the eternal union of our destinies?"

"Rachel, Rachel!—you will drive me mad!"—cried Clifton, perceiving how closely enfolded was her soul in the web of early associations and re-

ligious influence. "What is the meaning of this strange combination of simplicity and intelligence, of feeling and insensibility? Are you about to bestow yourself as a mere endowment—to give up your youth, your beauty, to one you regard only as a partner in your father's bank? Or do you—(tell me truly, I can bear it, Rachel, answer me for once honestly)—*do* you—*can* you love this man?"—

"Of course I do! My cousin has never breathed a harsh word to me, or been guilty of an unkind action."

"But is that enough for the intimate—the exquisite tenderness of wedded life?—Is it to *his* eyes your own can turn in unspeakable sympathy with all that is bright, noble, and glorious? Is it from *him* you will seek encouragement in your aspirations after knowledge—after truth? Is it towards him you will be conscious of that intense and fervent passion, which finds eternity itself insufficient for its prospects of happiness?"—

Miss De Bruyn had no reply for language so new, so alarming. It was not thus she had been accustomed to contemplate her union with her impassive cousin. It was a family arrangement,

immutable as that which made her the child of her mother, or the daughter of her tribe; but it was nothing more.

"I must not listen to all this," said she, becoming conscious of the delicacy of her situation, and making a movement to rise.

"You will not have to listen to it long!"—was Clifton's calm rejoinder, resuming some control over his feelings. "I am here but to bid you farewell for ever. After this night, I shall behold your face no more. Be happy, Rachel, since you can content yourself with the monotonous calm of an existence unbrightened by tenderness,—unendeared by the ties of spontaneous, fervent, passionate attachment!"—

"But you are a Christian!"—interrupted Miss De Bruyn. "Even had not my destiny been sealed by an eternal compact, I never could have become your wife."

It was now Walter's turn to remain silent; and Rachel mildly pursued her advantage.

"If, as you say," continued she, in a faltering tone, "I am to blame in not having discovered your attachment, and apprised you of the obstacles to our union, why did not *you*, who were

satisfied of my affection, acquaint *me* with the objections that were to prevent my being honoured with your hand?"

"On my life—my soul—I knew not of their existence!" cried Walter. "What was there in your position in the world, or your establishment at home, to induce suspicion that you were otherwise than the society in which I found you? But even had I known it," cried he, struggling with contending emotions, "nay, deeply as I am imbued by birth and education with prejudices against your faith and its professors, I would have waived all objections—forgotten all scruples—for the rich compensation of calling you mine for ever!"

Rachel was silent. A deep impression had been made upon her feelings.

"By my father's will," said she at last in a low voice, "I forfeit my whole fortune by non-fulfilment of my contract with my cousin."

"Are you then so dearly attached to the things of this world?"—exclaimed Clifton, with bitter contempt.

"As little as any human being," replied Rachel, unmoved by his sarcasm. "But how do I

know that others—that *you*—might be equally indifferent?"

"Great God! are you so little acquainted with human nature as to suppose that the man who would sacrifice the deepest prejudices of his soul for your sake, would not also resign the paltry temptation of a little miserable dross?"—

Again Rachel was silent. But this time, the impression upon her feelings was trebly profound.

"You would make me your wife then,—poor, penniless—rejected by my family—abhorred by my people——"

Clifton's reply burst forth at once from the impetuosity of a generous heart.

"You are excited by the passion of the moment," said Rachel, a bright expression of newborn love and happiness beaming from her eyes. "Think calmly of it, Clifton!—I give you till to-morrow for consideration."

"You mean that *you* desire to deliberate on such a sacrifice!"—

"No—my mind is decided. Such love as this can be but once the portion of any living woman. If to-morrow your reply be affirmative, I am your wife!"

On the morrow, the reply *was* affirmative; and on the following day Rachel De Bruyn summoned together her family, and apprised them of her resolution not only to break faith with her cousin, but to become the wife of a Christian! The consternation, the indignation, the persecution provoked by such a declaration may be readily conjectured. The elders of the family denounced her; her spiritual counsellors were called in. In reply to the interrogations of the high priest, she admitted not only her sacrilegious intentions, but that she had made no conditions with Clifton for the retention of her religious observances. She had perfect faith in his generosity.

"If you intended to inspire me with the horror you now manifest towards the professors of the Christian faith," was her consistent reply to the furious invectives of her mother, "you should not have exposed me to the attraction of their society. I have lived chiefly among Christians. It is *there* I have been happiest—it is *there* I am determined to be happy!"

It was vain, meanwhile, to urge upon her as an argument against her resolution, the misery she was inflicting upon her cousin; for

though Mrs De Bruyn was almost frantic at the prospect of her daughter's loss of fortune, John was evidently consoled by its forfeiture to himself for the loss of his cousin. — Impossible to show greater resignation. Two months, however, were to elapse previous to Rachel's attainment of her majority and acquirement of the power of election; and Mrs De Bruyn flattered herself that the interval, judiciously improved, might wean her daughter from a preference which *she* called madness, her nephew folly, and the synagogue sin. Without giving time for a renewal of intercourse with Clifton, she embarked that very evening for Rotterdam, accompanied by a venerable Rabbi, who for years had presided over the family conscience of the De Bruyns; and on being rejoined by her establishment, proceeded at once on a tour of the Rhine.

Closely as Rachel was watched by her mother, she was too much beloved by those around her not to obtain the means of communicating to Clifton the disastrous results of the step she had taken; and by the time the party reached Nassau, Walter was on his way to her assistance.

"You can scarcely believe," said the lively

Frenchwoman, by whom the anecdote was first related to me, "the sensation produced at Emms by the arrival of Mademoiselle De Bruyn. It was neither her beauty, her grace, nor the reputation of her enormous fortune, which captivated our attention; though never, I must confess, did I behold so perfectly lovely a creature! It was rather the sensibility of her countenance—the restlessness of her anxious looks—the irritating manner in which, though grown to womanhood, she was domineered over by her mother. Nothing could be more gentle than her demeanour—more reasonable than her conversation, so that we discerned no pretext for so much coercion. The mamma and Mr Steinkerpf examined every step she took, and every word that fell from her lips; and as all the world supposed that the heiress was on the point of marriage with her father's nephew, where was the use of maintaining her in such childish subordination?—

"At length, one evening, late in the month of August, as Prince Soltikoff, who was always mineralizing or botanizing along the cliffs, was returning in the dusk by the copses of the Nassau road, he perceived an English lady and gentleman

walking side by side in earnest conversation. The young man, who was tall and strikingly handsome, was a stranger to him—the lady was Miss De Bruyn. Though the Prince coughed repeatedly to apprize them of his approach, they appeared indifferent to his presence. Rachel was conversing in a low tone, broken by sobs—her companion addressing her with impassioned eloquence. All that Soltikoff's knowledge of the language permitted him to overhear was, when within sight of the kindling lights of the Baths, Miss De Bruyn gave her hand to the stranger, and uttered the words, "To-morrow, at midnight." They proceeded onwards in different directions. It is probable, however, that their rendezvous had not escaped detection, for the prince noticed a tall figure stealing along the cliffs."

"The prince, at least," said I, "had the gallantry to preserve the young lady's secret?"

"He had no opportunity for indiscretion. The following morning, we were all roused at daybreak, with intelligence that Miss De Bruyn had disappeared."

"In company with the young Englishman?"—

"By no means. No sooner was a search insti-

tuted by the mother, than Mr Clifton came forward in frantic dismay, acknowledged their meeting of the preceding evening, and their appointment for the night ensuing, preparatory to an elopement. Like Soltikoff, he had seen Rachel approach the village, and seen her no more. It was clearly proved that she never re-entered the hotel."

"And her mother?"—

"Mrs De Bruyn was distracted—offered enormous rewards for intelligence,—caused the neighbourhood to be searched,—the river examined; and, after ten days of fruitless investigation, with all the aid the local tribunals of the Grand Duchy could render, quitted the spot in despair."

"Either Walter Clifton was more persevering, or a confederate in her disappearance," said I, after some cogitation.

"Neither the one nor the other. *There* lies the grand mystery of the case. Mrs De Bruyn's despair was scarcely more evident than that of the unfortunate young man. Clifton is now in confinement at Frankfort, under the care of the British resident, till a proper person arrives from England to convey him home to his family. It

was indispensable to place him under restraint. He made two attempts upon his life. He could not be left at large. All Emms was in commotion."

"And has nothing further transpired concerning the victim?—Is it still supposed that she was assassinated?"—

"No one has the slightest grounds for conjecture. Madame De Bruyn, we are told, has put her family into mourning."

"Surely that was premature? — Had poor Rachel been unfairly dealt with, some trace of the horrible event must have appeared. I have it strongly on my mind that she is still living."

"Perhaps so," rejoined the lady, coolly tapping her snuff-box. "But in that case—*what has become of her?*"—

THE COST OF A REPUTATION.

A PARABLE.

"No, no, the postchaise is at the door,—it is too late!"—cried I to my mother and sisters,—I will not say how many years ago,—when about to set out for Sedan, bearing urgent letters of recommendation to the Duc de C., who was enjoying his ministerial holidays at a country-seat in that neighbourhood. "You cannot surely have expected, my dear mother, that at twenty years of age, I should sit down tamely contented with——"

"Twenty thousand livres per annum,—a cheerful happy home, with the best hunting, shooting, fishing, and prettiest sisters in the provinces!"—

interrupted the youngest of the girls. "Bernard! Bernard!—think twice before you sacrifice the happiness of such a destiny to idle dreams of vain ambition."

"Think of your poor cousin Henrietta, who loves you so dearly!"—remonstrated another of my sisters.

"Think of the example shown you by the best of fathers!"—added my mother in a graver voice.

"My dear mother,—my dear girls," cried I, respectfully kissing the hand of the former, as I prepared to take my leave,—"you should have spoken thus earnestly two months ago, before I addressed my first letter of solicitation to the Duc de C. Great men and great ministers are not to be trifled with. My visit has been announced, and I must go. Some day or other, you will rejoice that I had courage to tear myself from among you, and create for the honour of the family a reputation destined to ennoble the obscure patronymic of my fathers. In youth, we owe ourselves to the world; in order that, in later years, the world may repay the loan with its esteem. The public distinctions, essential to my happiness, once achieved, I will return straight to the Cha-

teau, marry my cousin Henrietta, and remain happy and contented among you for the remainder of my days."

"But why not be happy and contented now?"—still pleaded the three girls.

"In inglorious obscurity?—never!—You will be twice as proud of me, my dear little girls, when, four years hence, I return with epaulettes on my shoulders, a gay colonel from Versailles!"

"But if you should be killed in battle in the interim, my good brother?"—pleaded my little favourite Anne.

I muttered something about "glory,"—"renown,"—"fame,"—the usual claptraps of the occasion;—kissed them hastily all round, and, to avoid further importunity, jumped into the carriage. There was no arguing with their shrewd good sense and strong affection.

A day or two afterwards, I was at Sedan; a garrison town, where I was not sorry to obtain some insight into the pleasures and habits of a military life, previous to taking the first step in my career. Already, I foresaw a tremendous crown of laurels impending over my head. The exigencies of war

were just then direfully active. In half-a-dozen years, I might be a general officer; in a dozen more, perhaps, a field-marshal! So, at least, I assured myself, every time my servant touched his hat, addressing me by the ignominious title of "Monsieur le Chevalier!" — Even Henrietta almost ceased to occupy a place in my memory, so warmly were my hopes engrossed by my brilliant prospects.

The fortifications of Sedan, the roll of its drums, the martial air of its very citizens, who cock their hats in the street as much as to say to strangers visiting the town, "We are the countrymen of Turenne!"—did not tend to refrigerate my military ardour. I hated to find myself nothing in the eyes of the garrison. "Some day or other," said I to myself, "these people shall become familiar with my name!"—To be famous was the height of my ambition.

I supped that night with the mess of a regiment of cuirassiers quartered at Sedan; with one of the young officers of which, I had a family connexion. Among young fellows of our age, it soon transpired that I was on my road to the Chateau of the Duc de C.; that I was forthwith to accompany him to

Versailles, where he was to present me to the King, and take care of my promotion; and so unanimous were my companions in congratulating me upon my great good fortune, and predicting that, in a few years, I should be at the head of a regiment, that I felt prouder than ever of having found courage to extricate myself from the peaceful ignominy of a country life, and the arms of my pretty cousin Henrietta.

I ventured to inquire the road to the residence of the Duc de C., for which I was to set out early in the morning.

"Any one will show you the way," cried one of the officers.—"It is the famous Chateau where Field-Marshal Fabert breathed his last, and one of the finest places in the neighbourhood."

"Fine as it is, however," added another, "I know plenty of provincials hereabouts who would not set foot in it to command the interest at Court of the Duc de C.!"—

"Or even the good fortune of Marshal Fabert!" —added another. Then, finding me insufficiently versed in the feats and triumphs of the said marshal, they proceeded to relate the eventful history of one, who, from a printer's boy, had risen to the

highest military rank in Europe;—eventually refusing, from the hands of Louis XIV., letters-patent of nobility, and the insignia of the order of the Holy Ghost.

"In Fabert's life-time," observed one of the officers, "his rapid rise, and unexampled successes, gave grounds to a popular belief that he was indebted to magic for his unvarying good fortune."

"Nay, to this day," added another, "the peasants expressly point out the tower in which the General held his colloquies with the Evil One."

"*Colloquies?*"—retorted a third; "did you never hear the story of the General's death-bed?—The demon to whom he had pledged his soul, is said to have made his appearance at the Chateau during the last moments of Fabert, disappearing at the very instant of his decease!"—

"Carrying off, of course, in his Satanic pouch," added his comrade, with a hearty laugh, "the forfeited soul of the brave soldier who had outlived so many battles!"

"Laugh, and welcome, my dear fellow!" remonstrated one of the younger officers; "but I can tell you that scarcely a farmer in the district of

Sedan, but firmly believes that, every month of May, about the anniversary of Fabert's decease, the General's black man (as they familiarly denominate his Satanic Majesty) reappears at the Chateau!"—

"I congratulate you, my dear sir!"—rejoined the more sceptical of the set. "If you remain long enough the inmate of the Duc de C., you may hope to enjoy the excitement of an adventure."

A thousand idle jests resulted from this sportive hint; but though I joined heartily in the merriment of the mess-table, I confess it was not without a certain uneasy sensation that, through the misty rain of a spring morning, I descried the turrets of the Chateau of the Duc de C. the following day. I tried to make myself believe that awe at approaching the presence of a man so honoured with the friendship of his Majesty, was the sole cause of my nervous tremour. But in spite of my better reason, the idea of Marshal Fabert's Black Man was not without its influence. The Chateau was surrounded with vast forests, while a cheerless-looking lake extended its dingy mirror in the foreground. Nothing inviting in

its aspect! My mind was, however, too full of castles in the air, to admit of dwelling long upon the ominous features of the place.

On presenting myself at the gates of the old Gothic manor-house, I was courteously welcomed. But the groom of the chambers informed me it might be some hours before I received an audience of the Duke, who had slept the preceding night at a neighbouring country-seat. Refreshments were offered me; and I was installed in a sort of old armoury on the ground floor; on the walls of which a few curious military trophies were interspersed with boars' heads, stags' heads, and all the modern attributes of the chase. There were also certain old family portraits, which, at the close of a couple of hours, I began to think remarkably disagreeable companions.

Scarcely had I come to this conclusion, when a pannel of the wainscot slid gently aside, and a human head suddenly intruded into the room; of which, independent of its singular mode of apparition, the aspect was sufficiently appalling;—the features being wasted, the complexion cadaverous, and the coal-black hair wild and shaggy. Still,

there was something so strikingly intellectual in the face, that it was impossible not to feel interested, rather than terrified.

"What are you doing here?"—inquired a deep but tremulous voice, issuing from the almost livid lips of the intruder.

"Waiting for the Duc de C.," replied I, with as much self-possession as I could manage to assume.

"And do you fancy that you are the only person waiting for him?"—rejoined the stranger. "But the hour will come!—his, and thine, and mine,—the fatal hour will come.—Behold! the watcher watcheth for evermore!—The forests of the earth are green, and the skies of heaven are blue; but there is a worm that never dies, and a fire that is never quenched.—The fatal hour is at hand! This very night, and I shall have ceased to exist!"—

God forgive me,—but there was something in this announcement not altogether disagreeable,—I was far from sorry to hear my singular visitor avow himself to be a mere mortal, subject to the penalty of vulgar clay. And as he had now passed the threshold, and entered the armoury, I perceived

that, though wild in aspect, he was after all a well-dressed young man, about thirty years of age, apparently labouring under the consequences of severe indisposition or affliction.

"If you are waiting for the Duc de C., come into my room, where you will be better accommodated than here," said he, probably discerning in my countenance tokens of sympathy in his condition; and I accordingly followed him through the secret door, which he closed carefully after us, into a small secluded suite of rooms, of which he did the honours with the ease and politeness of a man of the world. Having taken a seat by my side, and struggled for some minutes with his emotions, as if striving to recover strength and coherency for further explanations, he thanked me for my frank confidence in his good intentions.

"You are entitled," said he, "to a full explanation of the strange circumstances under which we have met. Grant me your patience a while. By the time I have related my dreadful history, the Duke will probably be at liberty to receive you.

"I was born, sir, an inmate of this Chateau;—the youngest of three brothers, to the eldest of whom were apportioned the wealth and honours of the

House of C. Nothing remained for me but the wretched insignificance of churchmanship. I was destined to become an Abbé, dependent for preferment upon ministerial patronage. But with the blood and name of my heroic ancestors, I inherited their lofty ambitions.—Glory was my idol.—Earnest purposes of shining in the world already fermented in my bosom. I was resolved to make myself heard of, or to be heard of no more. So absorbed was my soul by this overpowering yearning after distinction, that the pleasures of life became indifferent. I lived only in the future. The present was comparatively of small account.

"Yet such was the clash and brilliancy of contemporaneous celebrities,—such an influx of literary and military glory diffused its radiance on every side,—that I attained my thirtieth year without accomplishing my end. I was still the obscure denizen of our family estates, — totally eclipsed by the poets, statesmen, and warriors of the day. I was in despair. At certain moments of profound despondency, suicide presented itself as my sole refuge from my bitter consciousness of insignificance. The purport of my life seemed frus-

trated. To what end an existence so obscure, so colourless as mine?—

"I was alone in my family.—My elder brothers were already distinguished in the world. My only confidant at home was an old negro, attached from time immemorial to the House of C. I say from time immemorial, advisedly; for so little was recollected of his first connexion with the family, that many people pretended he had been originally seen in this Chateau at the moment of the decease of Field-Marshal Fabert."

I could not altogether repress a start of surprise at this announcement. My companion inquired what was the matter; but it was not for me to refer to the singular intelligence I had received the preceding evening from my friends the cuirassiers.

"One day," resumed he, "when more than usually overpowered by the dispiriting sense of my own nothingness, I exclaimed aloud, 'I would sacrifice ten years of my life to accomplish a first-rate literary reputation!'—

"'Ten years is a large amount to pay for such a trifle!' observed Iago, who happened to be in

attendance upon me,—smiling as he spoke, till his two glaring rows of white teeth became frightfully apparent.

"'Large,—but not more than it is worth,' I persisted. 'I say again, that I would thankfully give ten years to become a popular author.'

"'Done!' replied the negro, with his wonted *sang froid*—(for he was the coolest fellow I ever beheld). 'I accept your ten years. In return, know that your wish is already half accomplished.'

"You may conjecture my astonishment at hearing him propose this singular engagement. But conceive my surprise when, a few days afterwards, I learned by the post, that a work of mine transmitted to Paris the preceding year for publication, had actually been crowned by the Academy!—My pledge was scarcely given, and I was already a person of note!—

"I flew to the capital,—and was received on all sides with open arms. The most distinguished men of the day were proud to make my acquaintance. Their praises, their examples, their counsels, encouraged my enthusiasm, as well as perfected my taste. Every successive work that emanated

from my pen, was pronounced to be a *chef d'œuvre.* I had assumed a supposititious name, in order to distinguish myself from my brothers; and scarcely a newspaper in which it was not twenty times repeated!—My works were translated into every European language.—My books were in every hand.—It was only yesterday, sir, that you yourself——but no matter!"—

My feelings were, by this time, painfully excited. Into *whose* presence had I thus singularly intruded?—*Who* was this mysterious stranger? Was it Diderot?—Marmontel?—D'Alembert?—Voltaire?—I began to regard my companion with a degree of respect, exceeding even my previous compassion.

"To a spirit so ardently constituted as mine," resumed he, after a heavy sigh, "even this excess of literary honour soon became insufficient for happiness. I said to myself after all,—what is there manly, what is there ennobling, in all this waste of pens and ink?—The occupations of the demigods, ere earth was peopled with mere mortals, was conquest.—Military renown is the only glory worth achieving.—To be a great

general, to become the leader of an army, were well worth the sacrifice of ten years of one's existence."

"'You continue to bid high,' cried Iago, who was still in my service. 'But once more, I accept your terms. *Ten years*, and you shall become a hero!'"

My countenance, I conclude, now began to evince tokens of incredulity; for the stranger suddenly exclaimed, "You do not believe me? Would that *I* too could be incredulous! For I swear to you, by all that is holiest in the universe, from the moment when, on the faith of this mysterious compact, I entered the army, I had only to plan expeditions to have them crowned with success beyond my most sanguine expectations!—History is at hand to confirm my asseverations.—My name was again an assumed one; but there was no illusion in the provinces it was my fate to attach to the sovereignty of France;—in the fortresses which ceded to my besiegement,—in the redoubts which I carried,—in the banners which I brought back to the feet of my king.—*These*, at least, were real; and these still survive to attest all I have been!"—

The stranger was now pacing the room with impetuous footsteps; and as I contemplated his movements, I could not forbear exclaiming to myself, "Who on earth have I before me?—Is it Coigny?—is it Richelieu?—or can it be Marshal Saxe *in propria personâ?*"—

After striding backwards and forwards in silence for some moments, he suddenly threw himself anew into the seat by my side.

"Iago assured me, during the intoxication of my military triumphs," he resumed, "that I should soon become disgusted with the fickle breath of popular applause. 'Sooner or later,' pleaded the negro, 'you will begin to understand that nothing is really important that has not a *real* value. The positive,—the tangible, is the one thing needful.' And he was so far justified in his prognostications, that I actually made him a tender of five additional years, on condition of obtaining the command over enormous riches."

"And he *fulfilled* his part of the compact?" cried I, with a scarcely repressed smile of incredulity.

"With gold,—jewels,—houses,—lands,—all,—all that passes with mankind under the name of

wealth, did he endow me!" cried my companion, clasping his hands with frantic emotion. "Nay, when I rose this very morning, all these were still my own.—I was rich,—I was great,—I was powerful!—I said to my soul, take thine ease!—I was happy,—I had no fears,—no anxieties.—If you doubt my word, inquire of Iago. Iago will be here presently, and confirm all I have related."

I shuddered at these wild assertions, for there was something terribly real in the air of horror with which he rushed to a time-piece on the chimney-piece, and anxiously ascertained the hour.

"This morning, when I opened my eyes," he resumed, addressing me in a portentous whisper, "I found myself so weak and dispirited, that I hastily summoned my *valet de chambre* to my assistance.—Merciful Powers!—It was Iago who appeared in his place!—My soul sank within me as he accosted me."—

"Yet his appearance, you say, was ever the precursor of triumph and good fortune," said I, desirous to tranquillize the agitation of the invalid.

"I asked him the cause of my sudden illness,"

continued he,—"I told him that only last night I retired to rest in perfect health!

"'It is not sickness,—*it is death!*'—replied the negro, with his usual frightful grin. 'Surely you are prepared?'—

"'For *death?*—at MY age?' cried I, gasping for breath.

"'It is not MY fault if you have been too much absorbed in your personal vanities to take heed of the lapse of time,' replied the negro, with a bitter sneer. 'Providence accorded you, as the term of your natural life, exactly threescore years. You were thirty when we first entered into our engagements."

"'Iago!'—cried I, anticipating the horrible announcement that was to follow.

"'And during the five ensuing years,' he continued, with his usual facetious insolence, 'you expended in speculations an extra allowance of five-and-twenty. You have consequently lived out your sixty years. You will find me tolerably correct in my arithmetic; for know, that every moment subtracted from *your* life is added to my own; and *I*, at least, recognize the value of human existence!'

"'Such, then, was the motive of your pretended zeal!'—cried I with indignation.

"'Greater men than yourself have shown themselves more grateful,' coolly rejoined the negro: 'Fabert, for instance, who was one of my *protégés*, paid me a somewhat higher price for his reputation.'

"'Iniquitous monster!'—cried I, 'you have deceived me,—defrauded me!'

"'Nay, nay,—you have only cheated yourself!' replied Iago. 'Count upon your fingers, and you will find me exact in my balance. Thirty-five years of real existence, and twenty-five expended in procuring the means of distinction;—total of the whole, sixty!—Admit that you have lived your day, and prepare for immediate dissolution.'

"He was about to leave the room, when I rushed towards him, and clung to his garments.

"'Only one more day!'—cried I;—'only, only one!'—

"'Not half a one!'—he coolly replied. 'Reflect that I am the loser of every minute's grace you obtain!—Your time is over.'

"'An hour—a single hour!' I persisted—feel-

ing the powers of life weakening and weakening as I spoke.

" 'Hark ye!' cried the negro, pretending to be softened by my earnestness—'you have hitherto negotiated with me like a gentleman, and liberal treatment is due to you in return. What will you give for two hours of the life you now appear to value so highly?'—

" 'Anything—everything!'—I exclaimed; for already I felt my blood stagnating in my veins, and the dews of death rising on my forehead. 'Willingly will I sacrifice all the fame I have achieved. Take my gold—my lands. Life,—life,—I only ask for the breath of life!'—

" 'You only ask for that of which you have been so prodigal!' cried the negro, with a horrible chuckle. 'But see how tender-hearted I am growing. I accept your offer. Live till evening! But remember you have nothing further here or hereafter to offer as a bribe. At sunset, therefore, be prepared for the worst!'

" So saying, he left me!" continued the stranger, wildly. " He left me—and when we meet again, I must resign myself to death—must cease to en-

joy the breath of spring—the harmonies of nature —the joys of life and love. Behold!" he continued, dragging me to the window, and pointing to a group of ragged peasants traversing the park; —"to-morrow, yonder people will be inhaling the pure breezes—will be sunned under the glowing orb of Heaven—*while, for me, all will be at an end!*—And to have sacrificed five-and-twenty years of such blessings—such pure and delicious enjoyments—for the vain acquirement of an uncertain renown;—to be praised by those I know not, those whom I care not to know!—Oh! what a price have I paid for that which is in itself valueless! What prodigality!—what waste!—But why lose the few moments allotted me in idle murmurs! Let me rather enjoy, for the last time, the glorious spectacle of triumphant nature!"

So saying, he threw open the windows opening towards the park, and rushing forth, took his way towards the plantations. While watching his precipitate departure, I found myself touched upon the shoulder; and, on turning round, found a grave middle-aged man, wearing the insignia of the St Esprit, standing beside me. I had no difficulty in recognising the Duc de C.

"I have a thousand apologies to offer you, Monsieur le Chevalier," said he, "for the inadvertence of my servants in leaving you exposed to an interview with my unfortunate brother, whose mental infirmities are the cause of his seclusion in this retired chateau, and of my annual visit to the place. It was to consult a physician, celebrated for his skilful treatment of lunatics, who is on a visit in this neighbourhood, that I last night absented myself from home. I have now, however, the satisfaction of bidding you welcome; and to-morrow we will take our departure for Versailles. All that my friendship or recommendations can insure towards forwarding your advancement in life, depend upon! The enthusiastic ambition of military distinction expressed in the letters I have had the pleasure of receiving from you, excites my earnest interest in your behalf. To such views the times are highly favourable. Rapid advancement awaits you. In the course of ten years, or so——"

"*Ten years*, Monsieur le Duc?" was my involuntary ejaculation; "ten years subtracted from the sum total of life?—Pardon me!—Within these walls I have received a lesson more valuable than

even the patronage you thus generously promise. To-morrow, instead of proceeding to Versailles, I retrace my steps homewards! Accept my grateful thanks—my humble apologies. Fame has lost its charm in my estimation. I have learned to recognise the value of human life, and the COST OF AMBITION!"

"This is my brother's doing!" cried the Duke, but more in sorrow than in anger. "The singular delusions of his monomania, have already more than once sufficed to deter young aspirants of my acquaintance from embracing a public career. But is it possible that you will allow the hallucinations of a lunatic to influence you in a step so momentous?"—

"Wisdom is a thing of too precious a quality, Monsieur le Duc," replied I, "to admit of our being over-fastidious in examining its origin. All we have to do is to accept such lessons, and be thankful!"—

The Duc de C. was perhaps not sorry to be thus easily rid of one of the numerous candidates for his interest at court; for, after a night's hospitality, he suffered me to return home without further remonstrance.

Happy journey—auspicious return! I felt that I could not travel too rapidly; for I was returning to the bosom of my family—the arms of Henrietta.

The following May, I had nothing to dread from the apparition of the black man. Already I was a contented country gentleman: a happy husband and father! *The price of fame had inspired me with a due appreciation of the value of human life!**

* This story, the only one in the collection not strictly original, is freely translated from the 'Tonadillas.' I have substituted it for one of my own, conceiving that so striking a moral cannot obtain too wide a circulation.

MR PRATTLES.

A DIARY.

So, here we are in the season again.—Goodness be praised!—Those country houses take too much out of a man, in return for what he extracts from them. It is well enough in those where one has the ear of the house, as well as the run of the house, — remaining a fixture, while successive parties of guests appear and disappear; for the same *bon mots* and good stories serve to amuse his Grace on Friday, which were tried upon the country-neighbour party with success, the preceding Monday, — as inoculation was attempted upon criminals, before the royal family were

submitted to the prick of the lancet. More particularly when the *whole* set has been renovated. It is a bore to have some single gentleman, or stationary *souffre douleur* cousin, on the watch for the point of every well-worn anecdote, like people at a pantomime, familiar beforehand with the tricks.

Still, even when one makes a hit, the wear and tear of the thing is prodigious. One goes through the work of three dinners per diem;—to wit, breakfast, luncheon, and dinner,—and all without refreshment! In town, one has the chance of the clubs and morning visits to brighten one. But in a country house, where one can only rub up per aid of the new works and periodicals lying on the table, or visits shared in common with the rest of the party, one *must* fall back on one's own resources,—and the effort is prodigious.

This is the third Christmas I have spent at K—— Park; and decidedly, I must provide for myself elsewhere next winter. Lord K—— is such a bore, with his everlasting relations!—That eternal brother and sister-in-law, and the neighbours Sir John and Lady Wiseacre, seem as completely established there as the family plate;

and it is too much to expect a man to do the agreeable, year after year, to the same people. I saw a smile exchanged between K—— and Lady Theresa, when I began my famous story about Perceval and Michael Angelo Taylor, as much as to say, "WHAT, AGAIN?"—And the Wiseacres, who are as rude as all the rest of the Shropshire squirearchy, told me in plain terms one morning at breakfast, on my attempting to hitch in poor Copley's capital pun about Vale Royal, that they had been circulating it all over the country ever since they heard it from my lips, five years ago!—

Rebuffs of that description are like a blow with a pole-axe. Next Christmas, I will try Yorkshire. Yorkshire is unbroken ground. They are hospitable people, with a good, hearty, wholesome laugh at one's service, and a strong capacity for being amused. There is something exhilarating in a fresh audience of that description.

I am sadly afraid, meanwhile, that K—— Park was a failure!—I did not do what was expected of me, or what I expect of myself. Several of the dinners were flat as the turbot; and the Duke yawned fifty-four times during the two short days he was there. I saw Lord K—— look at me

reproachfully, as much as to say that it was *my* fault; and I have no doubt he said to Lady Theresa, "I would not have invited Prattles, if I had known how dull he was growing;" whereas, had not Lady Theresa and her husband been there, I should have done wonders. Wilmot K—— is the dullest fellow breathing; and Lady Theresa's cold steadfast eye chills one like a nightmare!—

(*Mem.* to book a good story of Lady Theresa's English nursery-maid, who calls the "nightmare" the "coach-mare,"—having caught the word *cauchemar* from the French *bonne.*)

To return to K—— Park. It would be the deuce and all if a rumour should transpire that our party was *fiasco!* I had been foolish enough to circulate, far and near, that I was going. It has always a respectable air to be engaged, Christmas after Christmas, to the same country house. Should those yawns of the Duke's, therefore, get into circulation, the thing may cut me out of pleasant dinner-parties without end. As I mean decidedly to cut K—— Park next year, I have a great mind to take the initiative, and proclaim that the party was a lost case. It will be laid to

the Kennedys, who were there for the first time. For last Christmas, nothing could be more brilliant than we were; and I was so universally admitted to have been the life and soul of the party, that I was to be invited to all Lady Hunchback's dinners last season, solely on the strength of K—— Park.

Yes! the Kennedys shall answer for it. They are vulgar, pushing people, trying everything that false finery will do, to climb into good company. It won't do. There is nothing in either of them congenial with the listless *haut ton* of the great world. I heard Lady Theresa whisper to the Duke one evening,—"I never saw one of Lord K——'s parties turn out so ill. Too much quince in the apple-pie—too many monkeys in the menagerie!—One keeps fancying that all those whom these people were invited to entertain, had sent excuses. We have got the chorus; but the soprano and prima donna are absent without leave."

The Duke replied by one of his best executed yawns!—And after *that*, K—— expected one to be agreeable!—

Well!—no matter! Parliament has met, and

the dinners are beginning. No more country-house work till Easter, except for fox-hunters; and to amuse *them*, heaven be thanked, no one ever dreams of inviting conversation men. The whipper-in suffices.

My first care at the commencement of the season is to look over my list, preparatory to sowing cards for the dinner-crop, and a melancholy task it is!—Two or three of my best dowagers are pretty sure to have dropped in the interval, as is the case this very year. There is old Lady Fivecourse, in Berkeley square, whose cook was really a meritorious artist,—a fellow who will one day rank with the Udes and Francatelles. I called at the door the other day, to inquire what was become of him; and find that one of the executors has bribed him off to Ireland! This is a public loss. Besides which, the man himself is lost. Genius of that description requires an enlightened audience. The Irish are scarcely up to more than roast and boiled. It is throwing pearls before swine to give them such a man as Survilliers, who has glimpses of real inspiration.

I confess I had looked forward to many more pleasant dinner parties at Lady Fivecourse's.

There was no more occasion for that woman to die!—Though seventy-three, she was strong as a seventy-four—(*mem.* book *that!*)—and might have lived to be a hundred. It was entirely her own doing. She *would* go dining out, when, with such a cook as Survilliers, it was her duty to dine at home. And then she called in a young apothecary, instead of adhering to Sir Thomas, who never does anything, so that *his* patients *have* some chance of getting through. I don't mean to be ill-natured; but if I were a man of sufficient consequence for my funeral to figure in the 'Morning Post,' with a list of the mourners,—"third mourning coach, the medical attendant of the deceased earl, John Pillbox, Esq."—I would not employ a young apothecary, who knew that his connexion in business might be established by such an advertisement.

Poor Lady Fivecourse!—What a capital set one used to meet at her house! It was one of the places where I most enjoyed myself. Nothing but quiet, humdrum, mediocre people, who understood nothing but eating, and for whom one's oldest stories had the charm of novelty. I remember at a dinner in Berkeley Square, last April,

setting the table in a roar with an anecdote, which originally set me up as a dining-out man, in the time of George the Fourth! It was a story of Jekyll's; but he never did it justice, his imitation of the brogue being wretched. It improved in my hands. There are some stories, like some wines, which grow mellow with travelling. I never told it better than that day at Lady Five-course's, for I was taking pains. Lord Grangehurst was there; and I was wild to get an invitation to his new house, with the style and splendour of which, the newspapers had been boring one for the last year. The spec. prospered. I dined with him three times after Easter, and was asked to Grangehurst for the *battue*. But, on the whole, I was not satisfied. His cellar is not what it ought to be. No man ought to pretend to Hock who is not certain that his grandfather saw it in bottle.

Good Lord! what a sorry life should I have led, but for the lucky chance which gave me a cast in the Marquis of Woodsbury's post-chaise, on our transit from Oxford on quitting college!—Both were in high spirits, bursting forth like a fresh-opened bottle of Champagne; and my companion

fortunately mistook spirits for wit. The mistakes of a young nobleman in the enjoyment of thirty thousand a-year, are sure to find imitators. The women who wanted Woodsbury, whether for themselves or their daughters, protested that I was a charming creature; and after Woodsbury married, they did not think it decent to swallow their words, as they had swallowed mine.

During the scene of his bachelorhood I was invited everywhere. It disarmed suspicion,—that is, the pretty creatures fancied it disarmed suspicion to say, "Mr Prattles, are you disengaged on Friday?—We shall be delighted to see you at half-past seven. Lord Woodsbury, will you do me the favour to meet Mr Prattles?"—though if, after my acceptance, it turned out that Woodsbury had a prior engagement, they took care to make my venison, mutton, and my claret, *ordinaire*. They were practising on my inexperience, and I upon their cunning; for it was at the expense of these manœuvres I learnt almost all I know of the ways of the world.

I was such a boy, that they talked freely before me; making it tolerably clear that, according to the code of fashionable hospitality, nobody must

expect to be entertained who cannot entertain in their turn, either by their invitations, or their power of shedding grace upon the invitations of others.

This was a cruel lesson. Chambers, I knew, were my destiny. I was as likely to have a mitre to give away, as a dinner. I had no alternative, therefore, but to abjure the lordly haunch and luscious pine, and stick to loins of mutton carved hunchwise, and mealy apples by way of dessert, or study to become amusing. I am convinced that any person of even moderate abilities may become anything he chooses, perforce of earnestness of purpose,—a staymaker, or a Chancellor, or an opera-dancer, or a conjuror, or a quarterly reviewer,—no matter what! It is only the enervation of indolence that causes one to lag in the van.

Before the Woodsbury spec. was over, I had run over my part, and was almost perfect. I watched the conversation men of the day; I studied their very studied mode of being unstudied in their wit.—I discerned the most natural mode of lugging in impromptus made at leisure. Mademoiselle Mars at sixty-five enacts the part of the *ingénue*, or simple young girl, better than

all the little misses of sixteen on the Parisian stage. So the skilful professional wit throws out bait for his own puns, as Anthony sent divers into the river to attach fishes to his hook, when angling in presence of Cleopatra.

There were giants on the earth in those days. There were some capital dining-out men on the pavé. From punning Caleb Whiteford to racy Joseph Jekyll,—from polished William Spencer to unrivalled Sharpe,—from Colman to Canning,—from Brummell to Alvanley,—from Copley to Ward,—there was talking going on in London every day, between six and nine, which it did one's heart harm to hear; so envious did it make one of their colloquial tactics.

To attain high eminence as a diner-out, something more is required than the mere power of conducing to the amusement of the company. A very entertaining fellow, who was nothing *but* an entertaining fellow, and known to be in want of a dinner, might be asked once or twice, by way of lion, but would never be tolerated as a regular dinner guest in our best houses. In the first place, the diner-out must eat like an epicure, and not like a glutton. A hungry man is not suffi-

ciently at ease in his body, to be at ease in his mind. To be able to dispose of his own faculties, he must be in circumstances to appreciate the merits of the *entrée* he is tasting, while the party is tasting his *bon mots*,—but not to be *engrossed* by their excellence. His responsibility to his host must preponderate over the exquisiteness of his palate.

People do not like to throw away a first-rate *menu* upon a man who does not know *quenelles de veau* from sweetbreads, any more than on a fellow who sends his plate half-a-dozen times to the joint on the side-table.

On this head, I had nothing to fear. I possessed what is called "a genteel independence;" I was certain of my roast and boiled, fish and soup, at my own expense, all the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year. But what a prospect! Roast and boiled from the 1st of January to the 31st of December, when so many stew-pans were simmering in the aristocratic kitchens of Great Britain!—I felt that I had done nothing to deserve such a sentence at the hand of destiny. I felt myself predestined to the *salmi* and the *capilotade;* and, by dint of following up my vocation, can

safely say, that for the last six seasons, not a man in this gastronomical metropolis has enjoyed a more universal acquaintance with the sauce-boats of the great world.

A vulgar-minded man, incapable of seizing the lights and shadows of social life, thinks it enough to push on straight to the mark; and, with a predetermination to be entertaining, begins to open his budget before the soup is off the table; whereas there is scarcely more art required in dressing the dinner, than in addressing those who are invited to eat it. There are certain appointed epochs of a dinner, differing in different sets and countries, appointed for the specific introduction of certain wines,—as sherry or madeira after soup, or hock between the courses. So also there are especial moments for the introduction of divers orders of anecdotes. The man who attempts a bit of scandal while the patés or cutlets are going their rounds, will find his risk rewarded by reproving silence. People look as if they did not understand a word he was saying; while if he wait till after the second round of champagne, he will set the table in a roar. Even the first will so far thaw

the faculties or decorum of the party, that a significant smile may possibly repay his pains.

Soup admits nothing of more stirring interest than the weather. People are not yet at their ease. They have not recovered the fuss of taking their places; they have not got accustomed to their neighbours, or to the brightness of the dinner-room. They look blinky and perplexed. The edge of appetite, too, must be appeased. A few mouthfuls of hot, clear, spring soup, or *bisque d'ecrevisses*, cheers up the spirits, and disposes to sociability. A sip of sherry perfects the charm. By the time turbot and lobster sauce, or Severn salmon and cucumber, figure on your plate, you may venture upon politics and the news of the day. If a clever man be near you, and you have important intelligence *in petto*, inquire of him whether he have anything new; then, with easy negligence, let fall the startling news that is to fix every eye at table upon yourself. Choose that moment to take wine, or to whisper confidentially to the servant behind your chair a request for a second investigation of the fish-sauces. You should appear to be anxiously interested in the

coaxing of your own appetite, when you announce the abdication of the Emperor of China, or that her Majesty's favourite parrot is sitting. All this, as stage effect, tends powerfully to the success of the piece.

Anything superlative in the way of wit should be reserved, like the hock, for the *finale* of the first course. Even in the best regulated household, there occurs a momentary pause propitious to the explosion of a *bon mot*. The host is grateful to you; the *maître d'hôtel* is grateful to you; everybody is grateful to you. A minute later, and the bustle of placing the second course on the table would be fatal to the success of your attempt. That most disagreeable interruption at an end, the real business of dinner conversation begins. The tide is setting in. Till the rubicon of the second course be passed, your careful talker feels that all is preamble. It is not worth while to hazard anything of real excellence. It is waste of powder and shot to lavish pearls before the rapacious animals, who think more of what reaches them through their lips than through their ears.

But after the pheasant, green-goose, or turkey poult,—after the *fondu*, cabinet-pudding, and

Plombières, comes the tug of war! Not only are the ears of the party opened, but its hearts. People are ready to laugh at anything; yet not too merry to distinguish between wit and humour, an old story and a new anecdote. With the orange jelly, you may whisper to a fair neighbour; with the *méringues glacés*, you may acquaint a dark one with some fact of foreign policy or fine-art fiddle-faddle, of which he was wholly ignorant. He will not turn sulky at finding you better informed than himself.

During a diner-out's first season or so, he takes almost as much pleasure in all that he causes others to swallow, as in all that he is swallowing. He enjoys his own stories and his own success. But after making himself a name, after being cited here, there, and everywhere as the agreeable Mr Prattles, the new Sheridan, the future Macaulay, he begins to grow nervous. He feels it necessary to talk up to his reputation, and a duty is always irksome. One dull dinner would undo him! A party where the sound of knives and forks is audible from pauses in the conversation, reflects eternal disgrace on its component parts, should it come to be known that a regular diner-

out was one of the offenders. He is a lost mutton, —that is, a lost buck !—

He accordingly begins to cram, as if reading for a degree,—saps scandal, and works up his small talk as for the Seatonian prize. When first a man confronts the publicity of society, he is unable to distinguish its shades and gradations Like a child contemplating the starry firmament, he beholds millions of stars, and rates them alike, incapable of distinguishing their gradations of magnitude.

To make oneself agreeable at the dinner-table in certain circles, it suffices to read the periodicals as they appear, to skim the daily papers and be able familiarly to quote the jokes of the last number of the 'Quarterly Review.' In others, it is necessary to have written one of these showy flare-ups, to obtain the ear of the company; and to hazard any direct allusion to them, above all to cite their witticisms, or any other good thing that has appeared in print, would be destruction. In such a party, a stale joke would be thought as offensive as a stale John Dory. The stories narrated must have their bloom upon them, like the grapes; and every

anecdote boast its virgin bouquet, like every bottle of claret. Even a moderately witty thing, wholly new and inedited, obtains a higher value than the best *mot* of Alvanley filtered through the clubs.

"As somebody was saying yesterday at White's," observed a man at the capital table of the late Lord S——, and was about to relate some thrice-told tale, when Lord —— interrupted him with, "If I wanted to know what any one said at White's, I should go there and hear it. I prefer something which you both think and say yourself, or, at all events, something new and original."

Such a rebuff is too disagreeable to be wantonly provoked. For the same reason, nothing so stupid as to cram from books like 'Walpole's Letters,' or 'Crequy's Memoirs,' or any other, not old enough to be forgotten. News should be of Charles the Second's time or Queen Victoria's; and nothing in the way of crib can be safely hazarded later than the times of George the First.

Time was that ten pounds' worth of French, from the usher of some preparatory school, was worth a whole season's entertainments; and in the

early part of the present century, more than one diner-out traded exclusively upon popular books of French memoirs, still unfamiliar to the jog-trot London world.

They fished their gastronomy out of Grimod de la Reynière and Brillat Savarin; their wit out of Grimm, Diderot, and Mesdames du Deffant and D'Epinay; their philosophy from L'Hermite de la Chaussée D'Antin, and their sentiment from Madame de Souza. Even our comedies were then "taken from the French," without fear of reprisal. But now that every lawyer's clerk visits Paris at least once a-year, and that the Burlington Arcade and its libraries supply wit and information at three-and-sixpence per month, to all classes of the community, a man attempting to dine out upon the 'Revue de Paris,' 'Revue des deux Mondes, 'La Mode,' and 'La Presse,' would be coughed down. It is only some solemn review that dares put on its considering cap, and inflict these stale scraps upon the public. For my part, having a reputation to sustain, I would not venture on anything, even wet from the press of Dumont or Lavocat, for several of the young Members have over early sheets to brighten their speeches.

I had once a severe lesson on that score. Everybody knows the story of Conversation B. strolling to the toilet-table of Conversation S. one afternoon, where his card of mems. for the night was laid out with his pumps and white waistcoat; conning by rote the topics to be dragged in, and preceding him in the various opera-boxes to which they were assigned; so that every time the professed wit opened his lips, it was to recount some anecdote or *bon mot* which had been recited ten minutes before, by his rival. Exactly such was my disaster!—I had received one morning a batch of pamphlets from Paris; and, as usual, extracted the pith for my private use. The gems thus strung together, I intended to powder over my conversation that day at one of Lady Cork's choice dinner parties; and had consequently provided myself with nothing else. I entered her famous old china-gallery, on the divans and slender porcupine-chairs of which I found scattered the best and brightest of the season. "All was prepared, the judges were met, a terrible show."

Unluckily, I came late, having been detained running my eye over my notes; so that when I made my *entrée*, that pushing fellow, L., had

already the ear of the company. Judge of my horror when I found him giving tongue to one of my most striking novelties!—I longed to fly at him, and snatch it from his mouth,—as one sees a sharp terrier when another dog has pilfered a bone from him!—But it was all in vain!—He had taken the first move. *Bon mot* after *bon mot* did he let fly from his pigeon-trap, and every shot told. I had nothing left. The fellow subscribed to the same library as myself; had obtained a view of the books four-and-twenty hours before me,—and reduced me to bankruptcy. Cut up as I was, not even an incipient influenza which I pleaded, sufficed my excuse with the old lady; and though I had the precaution to keep my chambers for a week, to give colouring to the pretext, she never invited me again the whole season, except to one of those horrible *olla podridas* which she sometimes gave at the end of her dinner weeks, to dispose of the fragments, and drink the bottlings-up of wine. It may be supposed that I did not allow myself to be converted into quick-lime.

Ill-natured people fancy that the life of a dining-out man is a life of corn, wine, and oil; that all he has to do is to eat, drink, and be merry. I

only know that, had I been aware in the onset of life of all I should have to go through in my vocation, I would have chosen some easier calling. I would have studied law, physic, or divinity; I would have gone the circuit; I would have even gone the whole hog, and become a parson, rather than enjoyed the Barmecide's feast of a professor of wit. Eat and drink he may, but to be really merry I defy him!—Viands and generous wines pass through his lips, without making the least impression on his palate. His attention is pre-engrossed. By venturing to dwell upon a dainty dish, he is sure to lose the opportunity of introducing some striking remark, or hazarding some neat little pun. His appetite is continually on thorns. His slice of venison is, perhaps, brought him just as he has launched into some capital story; and he has only the alternative of spoiling it, or finding the fat become of opaline opacity when enabled to pay himself proper attention. Now venison, like time and tide, waits for no man; and the stupidest ass of a country cousin may swallow it when the said fat is clear as amber, while the diner-out finds it gradually freezing upon his hapless plate!—

In the same way, one's iced pudding begins to melt while one finishes a series of *reparties* with some sharp opposite neighbour. I remember last season having an *avalanche* before me, that would have cooled the fire-king only to look at; and before I could command the use of my lips, the recent inundation at Brentford was not more fluent than my plate!—

It is the custom, by the way, of quadrille dancers to be very scrupulous in engaging a *vis-à-vis*. Young ladies pretend that it is of as much consequence to them to be mated with an eligible opposite neighbour, as with an eligible partner. It is of fifty times as much importance to a dining-out man!—What he says to his two next neighbours, however interesting, does him little or no credit with the party. But a confederate opposite is as invaluable an adjunct as the clown attending the horsemanship at Astley's. The whole audience is convulsed with the witticisms addressed to him. The whole table is in a roar when I happen to sit facing Horace or Sydney. In such a partnership, one loses nothing by a division of profits.

On the other hand, it is a horrible trial of

patience to bowl to an awkward bat, or throw the ball which there is no one to catch. I know nothing more bewildering than for a man who knows himself to have been invited for the entertainment of the company, to get placed, through one of those blunders which so often occur in mixed dinner-parties, next to some dunny dowager—dunny in mind as well as body; or opposite to a bevy of misses in muslin frocks, to whom it is not permissible to plead guilty of an idea. Conversation is out of the question. It is like singing with your face to a stone-wall.

Every fresh attempt at liveliness is rewarded with a stare of stupid wonder; and it is only when you make yourself comprehensible to the meanest capacity by abusing the weather, or canting about the state of the times, that you are rewarded with more than monosyllables in reply. In vain do you chafe and fret. You have, perhaps, half-a-dozen capital stories fermenting in your brains. Take my advice. Postpone your triumph. Endure your total eclipse in solemn silence. It is useless attempting to make bricks without straw.

One of my best houses is the Marquis of Bexfield's. What a *chef!*—what a *maître d'hôtel!*—

what an establishment!—what a master thereof!—Such a pleasant set, too!—fine people, who are not too fine, and coarse people, who are not too coarse. From the moment of crossing the threshold, one is conscious of a certain *bien-être* pervading one's animal nature; as in a warm-bath, or the sortie from a long sermon at Christmas, or in the dog-days.

There are certain capital dining-houses, such as that of the late Lord S., where gastronomy is made of too-engrossing importance. One eats too critically, and grows nervous lest one should be betrayed into enjoying something which the knowing ones decide to be not of the highest quality. In such a set, the conversation-man is of secondary importance. People are invited exclusively to eat and drink. The talker is there only to fill up the pauses between the numerous courses. At Lord Bexfield's, this is not the case. One stands one's ground with the *bastions de volaille* and *château margout*.

The only fault I have to find with his lordship's arrangements, is the multitude of plums in his pudding. He has too many of us. The other day I dined there, expecting to meet the Guern-

seys, the Middlesexes, and others of that class, with whom I had noticed, in the 'Morning Post,' Lord Bexfield to have been lately dining. Not a bit! Nothing but authors and diners-out, with their females!—I never met a stupider set of people. They all looked affronted at being asked to meet each other; and every time the door opened, I saw them looking out anxiously for some lorldly or ladyly arrival. We were there to enjoy each other's society, to entertain each other; when every soul of us knew that not one of the party was a dinner-giver, and consequently deserving the attention of the rest. The utmost which any of them pretended to, was, what is anomalously called a good plain cook!—"Oh! oh!"

I wonder whether the Mecænases of Astley's Amphitheatre or Sadler's Wells would do so stupid a thing as collect their tumblers to entertain each other with feats of agility? that is, to betray the mysteries of their calling, and allow a rival to discover how the fire was eaten, and how the eggs were balanced? For my part, I was once idiot enough to let fall one of my choice stories, one of my "gems for the season," before Punham, who

most nefariously made it his own; and, as he goes among a set of people ignorant enough of the etiquettes of society to feel entitled to seize on all they hear, and appropriate waifs and strays, like Cornish wreckers, I had the agony of hearing one of my best compilations torn to pieces wherever I went,—served piecemeal,—and martyrized by clumsy dealing in the operation. Punham used to sit by, listening with an untortured countenance; and, like the distracted mother, brought to light by King Solomon's division of the living babe in her presence, any one of common discretion might have recognised me, by my anguish, to be the legitimate parent of the bantling.

By the way, Punham has one terrible advantage over me. His seat in the house places him in the current of a thousand rumours, which I only receive by a side-wind. Punham knows on Monday, the scandal I am glad to repeat on the Tuesday. I have been sometimes ready to expire when, after firing great guns to draw the attention of the table to some little bit of news I had picked up in the afternoon at the Athenæum, or some visit, my narration has been met with, "Yes; I fancy it is true. Punham mentioned it at Riddles-

worth's yesterday at dinner." Parliament, too, keeps him out of the routine of nauseous humdrum dowager-visits, to which I am harnessed. I have heard Lady Clairville say to *him*, "Oh! I always make excuses for *you*. I know how much you are taken up at the house;" and while I wear my wits to the stump in fetching and carrying tittle-tattle for her, she invites Punham to all her pleasantest dinners,—he who never does more than leave a card at her door!—I have half a mind to renounce her set altogether; for I look upon Punham as a sort of extinguisher chained to my flambeau.

Would I could hope that her set would regret me, as I deserve to be regretted. But they pretend to call me a tale-bearer. One day, when I was sitting there, that saucy fellow, Sir Henry——, began talking about the legislative wisdom of putting to death all stray animals in the time of the Plague; protesting that more mischief was conveyed from house to house by idle in-and-out puppies, than by responsible persons. I knew what he meant. I was almost inclined to call him out. But I was to dine the next day with the Marquis, and did not want to injure my digestion.

Those dinners at the Marquis's are my sheet

anchor!—I dine at twenty other places, on the strength of them. It is not alone the excellence of my friend Casserole, or the splendid liberality with which the whole thing is conducted; but next day,—nay, for three days afterwards,—one is able to drop in at a hundred different houses, letting fall incidentally something one heard or saw there as an excuse for a careless allusion to the dinner. Then comes the inevitable inquiry, "Did you dine there yesterday?"—"Yesterday, or Wednesday was it? Yes, yesterday."—"And who had you?"—"Not a very large party—the Duke of Wellington (or whoever may be the lion of the day), and a few others of one's own set."

I hardly ever knew the bait fail of a nibble. Slow people are fond of being able to say to the next equally humdrum morning visitor,—"Prattles has just been here. He heard yesterday at Lord So-and-so's ——" and next day one gets an invitation. The Marquis's dinner kittens half a hundred other dinners.

I must own, however, that I had fewer on my list last season than any preceding one. Did this arise from a diminution in the aggregate of dinners given, or of my own popularity?—The

latter, I fear! People get fanciful in the matter of their conversation men. Though certain dishes must recur and recur again in their *menu* every spring,—salmon, turbot, lamb, or turkey-poult,—they seem to think it necessary to have a change in their talkers. It is only Rogers who blooms afresh every season, with the lilacs. There is always some new man,—something that has taken an honour,—or returned from the North Pole or Timbuctoo,—or written a book that has been exalted in the 'Edinburgh,' or cut to mincemeat in the 'Quarterly,'—or blown up a fort in Syria,—or inherited half a million a year,—or run away with somebody's daughter, or *from* somebody's wife,—or something wonderful or other, that entitles him to the veneration and dinners of an indulgent public. With such a card in hand, our friends grow ungrateful; forget how many a stupid party of theirs one's efforts had redeemed from the yawns;—and invite one to a family dinner! I must do as poor Lady Cork used, when her popularity was flagging; *viz.* send an account to the newspaper of my own death, and next day, the contradiction. Something to this effect:—

"We learn, with the liveliest regret, the death

of that amiable man, and charming companion, Alfred Prattles, Esq. Few persons could be so ill spared from the symposia of social life! Mr Prattles has been for many years past recognized as one of the most distinguished members of the literary and fashionable world; and no party was considered perfect without the addition of his brilliant and highly piquant conversation. He was, perhaps, on the whole, the liveliest talker of the day."

Followed by, "It is with the most unfeigned satisfaction we learn that there is not the slightest foundation for the rumour of the premature decease of that highly-popular individual, Mr Prattles. We had ourselves the satisfaction of seeing him yesterday in St James's street, walking arm-in-arm with the Duke of Wellington; nor can we sufficiently despise the callous and wanton levity with which certain persons, for the furtherance of private pique, presume to harrow up the feelings of anxious friends by the circulation of reports of this cruel nature. We cannot sufficiently apologize to our subscribers for our insertion of so ill-advised a fabrication."

I foresee from hence the compunctious visitings

brightening up the damped affections of my friends and acquaintance, on perusing such an announcement! "Poor Prattles!" they will exclaim, "I don't know how it was,—I had not seen so much of him lately.—Yet he is one whose company is always an acquisition,—a most amusing little fellow,—a man who knows everything,—a man whom everybody knows.—Heartily glad to find he is still extant!—By Jove! I'll call on him to-morrow and ask him to dinner."

Even those less affectionately disposed towards me, even those who perhaps think me a bore, will be moved to ejaculate, "Poor little Prattles!—after all, there was more twaddling than mischief in his gossip. His tittle-tattle was only the labour of his vocation. He never did any harm,—that is, he never meant to do any harm.—If he sometimes administered arsenic instead of magnesia, it was only through a mistake of the labels. He never poisoned people with malice prepense. And he was really very good fun in rainy weather in the country, or when trying to sit his horse in the Park. I fancy we could better spare a better man than Prattles."

And then one's works!—The moment a literary

man dies, and the newspapers take to getting up his memoirs, every little anonymous thing of merit that has been floating about for the last ten years, is laid to his charge. The real author has always the power of establishing his right to his unclaimed dividends; a letter to the editor from the "constant reader of his invaluable journal," informing him in roundabout phrase that his facts are fictions, and his fictions rubbish, only serves to increase the interest of the paper. On the strength of my decease, I shall probably be accused of 'Violet the Danseuse,' or the 'Adventures of a Coxcomb.' I have a great mind to charge myself with 'Fashionable Friends,' and 'The Nun of Arrouca.' It might be a considerable relief to the shoulders of the administration,—and at all events produce a newspaper controversy, certain to bring all parties into notice. 'Pon honour! the idea may be worth working out!—What neat little articles in the 'Examiner,' 'Spectator,' 'Athenæum,' 'Atlas,' and 'Literary Gazette,' will endeavour to fix the cap upon the rightful head!—What fudgerations in the Magazines,—what solemn sneers in the Quarterlies.—I foresee a vista of dinners prolonged from the Easter feast to the July banquets of

Lovegroves (when the white-bait, like hobbledehoys, have outgrown their melted butter), issuing from this lucky suggestion.

How I hate all those weekly papers,—with their "Library Tables," and "Weekly Gossip," and "Foreign Correspondence," taking the very roll out of one's mouth!—The digestive doctors swear that the human constitution has never got on half so well since the elaborate processes of modern gastronomy in the form of soups, gravies, and jellies, took its labours out of its hands. They protest that the epigastric functions, not having enough to do, prey upon themselves, and consequently do mischief. The processes of the human mind are vastly analogous to those of the human stomach. When people used to work hard in the pursuit of knowledge, a healthy appetite was engendered; and it is only since the hashes of literature came to be constantly served at our tables, scraps of poetry, romance, or history, enhanced by the peppery sauce of the reviewers, that we lost all taste for the wholesome learning, the solid sirloin of the historian, the homely batter-pudding of Mrs Trimmer and Mrs Chapone. Above all, the impertinent celerity with

which these placarders of literature send flying all abroad news of the birth of every *chef-d'œuvre* and the suicides of rash authorship, is enough to distract one.—Five-and-twenty years ago people took a couple of months to decide whether it were worth while to send to Hookham's for the new novel; and six weeks after the publication of Southey's last epic, used to be asking each other whether that strange man, who wrote Espriella's Letters, had not been attempting something new? Now, while Bulwer's youngest is still damp from the press, not a linendraper's apprentice in Regent street but is competent to inform the errand-boy that "it ben't by no manner of means hequal to Huge and Harem."—The march of intellect makes its way into every hole and corner, in more than double-quick time.

I have long perceived that my little trips of discovery to Paris, for the importation of "novelties of the season," are of no more use than if I marched up Highgate Hill and down again. Nothing nearer than Constantinople is in the slightest degree available. Between steam-navigation and yachting, the Mediterranean is grown as vulgar as the Nore. Could the ghost of Capt.

Cook arise to inquire why it has never been laid in Westminster Abbey, how immensely astonished it would be to find people steaming it over the Red Sea, as easily as they used to row, in his time, over Chelsea Reach; and the name of Polynesia as familiar in their mouths as that of Polly Peachum!—For my part, I am thinking of a tour for next autumn (if the untimely decease scheme do not fructify as I anticipate), and cannot for the soul of me hit upon anything sufficiently exclusive to give a fillip to public curiosity, or pretend to be written up by the 'Quarterly.'

The only spot of earth concerning which St James's street and Belgrave square know nothing, is the City of London. I have a vast mind to try, "TRAVELS TO THE EAST; WITH SKETCHES OF SMITHFIELD AND THE BARBICAN; by one of the opera-tive class," or some such taking title. One might furbish up famous antiquarianisms out of the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' about Crosby Hall and Winchester House, and bring in a host of savoury little compliments to the various companies, and different aldermen, certain to bring down coveys of dinners!—I smell turtle and venison in the very promise!—The Albion—

Bleaden — Birch ! — August names ! — Cornhill, promiseth corn in Egypt; Smithfield, marrow and fatness;—Warwick lane, manna.—The city must necessarily abound in *byres* and *cellars*, — fat beeves, and strong beer. Fish ought never to be eaten westward of Temple Bar; and albeit, the Bank and Stock-Exchange make their turtle-soup, like their twenty per cent., out of calves' heads, there are capital little *fricots* tossed up in the Poultry. — Yes, — decidedly, if a supposititious demise do not mend my fare, I will try the Eastern circuit.

I wonder whether anybody will start anything *new* this season ?—The town is wretchedly in want of a startle to make it open its eyes. Society is miserably drowsy. The great deficiency of the English mind is invention. The country is full of originals; yet collectively, we are the most jog-trot nation in Europe. *I* must not quarrel with the fault; but for which, the vocation of diner-out would be extinguished. The *Pique assiette* of the French was a fellow who arrived with *couplets* in his pocket, to enliven the dessert, and administer to their love of gaiety. The diner-out of the English, is a man who brings news to stir up the

stagnancy of the unimaginative natives of Great Britain.

To-morrow, being Sunday, I will drop in at the Marquis's, and ascertain what "novelties he has in preparation," as the theatres say. Everything that is cleverest throws off at Bexfield House, and should there be anything worth talking of in rehearsal, it were fatal not to be behind the curtain.

Where will the next volcano start up?—Canada is burnt out, and Syria subsiding. Nobody cares about Circassia, except the perfumers. I wish they would push the thing a little in China. When that hare was started, I pumped a monstrous deal out of Henry Ellis; and have got notes embellished with names, polysyllabic enough to stretch from the first course to the second, which I could make deliciously available.—Souchong and pekoe exhale from every syllable!—Besides, I once received a note from Lord Jocelyn (declining a dinner invitation), which entitles me to hint, in a careless manner, that I am in correspondence with his lordship. If I could but cram a little from Pekin, I should consider myself crammed for the season!—

A HOUSE OF FIVE STORIES.

BY THE OLD BACHELOR IN PARIS.

SKETCH I.

The Boulevarts may be said to perform for Paris the functions fulfilled by the cestus of Venus towards that amphibious goddess, by surrounding it with a magic girdle of fascinations. Every sort and variety of entertainment is to be found comprised in their cincture of the city, from the stately Académie de Musique and Italian Opera, full of dandies and dowagers, to the trestles of rope-dancers, amphitheatres of dancing-dogs, and galleries of wax-work, full of plough-boys and pickpockets, and every species of domicile, from

the gorgeous hôtel to the humble stalls of the venders of liquorice-water and *galette*. At one extremity, we have the costly *menu* of the Café de Paris, with its *ortolans* and *poudings à la Nesselrode;* at the other, the greasy *fricots* of La Courtille. The Café Turc brays forth with Tolbecque and an orchestra of trumpets and bassoons; the *guinguettes* of the Faubourg St Antoine scrape away with their solitary fiddle. Every species of shop and merchandize, from the sumptuous *magasin* of Le Revenant to the *boutique à vingt-cinq sous;* every species of temple, from the Parthenonic Madeleine, to that aërial shrine of liberty, the site of the Bastille; every gradation of display between splendour and misery is epitomized in the circuit of the Boulevarts.

Play, opera, farce, feats of equestrianism, funambulism, somnambulism, and humbugism of every colour, industrious fleas and idle venders of magic eye-salve, successively arrest the attention; while in the vicinity of the Café Tortoni, famous for the coldness of its ices and heat of its quarrels, the *courtier marron* plies his trade of trickery; stock-jobbing has full possession of the *pavé;* and almost within hearing of the knowing ears of the

Jockey-Club, and the ears polite of the Union, bulls and bears outbellow the fashionable jabber of the Boulevarts.

On emerging from the head-quarters of English Paris, the Rue de la Paix, to the Boulevarts des Capucines and des Italiens, the eye is dazzled by gilding, gas-light, plate-glass, scagliola, or-molu, varnished counters and panelling in grotesque and arabesque, interspersed with glittering mirrors, as appliances and means of getting off the lowest goods at the highest rate. A little further, and by an imperceptible gradation, vice succeeds to frivolity. Instead of milliners and jewellers, we find billiard-tables and gambling-houses, deepening at length into the more tremendous hazards of the Stock Exchange. After passing the vicinity of the Bourse, we come, naturally enough, to the quarter of the Jews; passing through the speculative neighbourhood of the Passage des Panoramas, which is but a splendid game of chance materialized into stone and marble.

Next to this gaudy section of the modern Babylon, dwells solid trade;—the streets of St Denis and St Martin, accompanied by such theatres

and such coffee-houses as might be expected to minister to the sensual and intellectual delights of the *marchand en gros;* melodrama, and the Porte St Martin,—the *Cadran Bleu,* and its unctuous *cuisine.* The vicinage of Rag Fair (the *marché aux vieux linges*) succeeds; then the Boulevart still bearing the name of Beaumarchais, the mansion formerly inhabited by the creator of Figaro being appropriately occupied by a refinery of salt; and lastly, in the wake of rags and wit, the site of the Bastille, the rallying-point of the most seditious parish of Paris, the republican quarter of the manufacturers, the tremendous Faubourg St Antoine!

Precisely at the boundary limit between the pleasure and business sections of the Boulevarts, at the corner of the Rue du Faubourg Montmartre, on an airy second floor with a projecting balcony, commanding a view of the sporting world to the right, and the trading world to the left,—the idle west, and active east,—there lived a certain Monsieur Georges,—a little weazened man, of doubtful age, doubtful fortune, doubtful reputation. Everything about him was equivocal. In Paris, people occupy themselves

far less than in London with the affairs of their neighbours. The great have something better to do, the little something worse; the rich being too busy with play, the poor too busy with work, to have leisure for the dirty scandals which spring up like *fungi* in that region of lords and lackeys, Grosvenor Square. Nevertheless, the porter's lodge of every Parisian house is a chartered temple of Echo, having a gossipry and a jargon of its own. The porter's lodge knits stockings, reads novels, and composes romances; peeps into letters, interrogates chambermaids, and confederates with duns. A man loose in his habits had need be very close with his domestics, in order to escape the detection of his porter's lodge.

Yet in spite of fifteen years' domiciliation in that polished corner of the Boulevarts, Monsieur Georges, though far from a beauty, was still a mystery. *Madame la portière* had never been able to discover whether "Georges" were a surname given by father to son, or a Christian name given by godfather to godson. She sometimes thought him a single man, sometimes a double, nay, sometimes a treble. Curious varieties of the

fair sex occasionally visited the balconied saloon, —young, old, and middle-aged,—shabby-genteels who passed for poor relations, and tawdry ones who passed for worse. There was no roost in his abode, however, either for the birds with fine feathers, or the birds without. Monsieur Georges' foible was not that of hospitality. His interests were too intimately cared for by a ferocious *femme de confiance*, who set himself and his house in order, and caused his establishment to be designated in the neighbourhood as that of George and the Dragon.

If not generous, however, the little man was strictly just; he gave nothing, but he kept nothing back. He paid his way with the praiseworthy punctuality remarkable in those who never pay an inch of the way for other people.

It is a hard thing, by-the-bye, that while male designations leave the fact of the man's bachelorhood uncertain, a spinster is specially pointed out by the malice of conventional phraseology. Mr or Monsieur may be married or single, as he pleases; but Mrs and Madame assume, even on the direction of a letter, their airs of matronly

superiority over Miss or Mademoiselle. While her master rejoiced in his ambiguity as *Monsieur* Georges, *Mademoiselle* Berthe was designated to mankind and womankind in all the odium of spinsterhood; and exclamations of "old maid" and "*chipie*" followed her daily passage past the porter's lodge, the moment the "grim white woman" reached the first floor.

Among those who indulged in the acrimonious apostrophe, the most persevering, if not the loudest, was an urchin of some fourteen years old, whom Monsieur Georges had added to his establishment two years before, by way of Jack Nasty, page, or errand-boy, under an engagement to clean Monsieur Georges and the housekeeper's shoes, without dirtying the ante-room with his own; to work much, eat little, sleep less; to keep his ears open, and his mouth shut; his hands full, and his stomach empty; his legs were to be evermore running, his tongue never.

Now, little Auguste (Auguste in the parlour, and Guguste in the porter's lodge), though reared in a provincial foundling hospital, where infants are fed, like sheep, on a common by the

score, and washed, like pocket-handkerchiefs, by the dozen, had unluckily both a will and an appetite of his own. Cleaning Mademoiselle Berthe's shoes inspired him with a fancy for standing in them; and, on more than one occasion, he was found to have encroached upon the housekeeper's breakfast of coffee and cream, instead of contenting himself with wholesome filtered water. He was forthwith accused of being a greedy pig, and making a litter in the apartments; till, after six months of faultiness and fault-finding, Monsieur Georges pronounced him to be an incorrigible *gamin*, sentenced him to "bring firing at requiring," and blacken shoes as usual, but to have his bed in an attic under the roof, Parisianly called, after the famous Parisian architect, a *mansarde*, and his board in the porter's lodge, where the board was exceedingly hard; Madame Grégoire,—the knitter of stockings, reader of novels, and coiner of romances for the corner-house of the Rue Montmartre,—having consented to feed and cherish him at the rate of twenty-five francs per month, *id est*, five weekly shillings lawful coin of her Majesty's realm. Monsieur Georges per-

haps intended to starve the saucy *gamin* into submission. He *did* almost succeed in starving him into an atrophy.

Guguste, however, was a lad of spirit, and could hunger cheerfully under the housekeeping of the kind-hearted Madame Grégoire; who made up for the scantiness of her cheer by the abundance of her cheerfulness, buttered her parsnips with fine words, and gave the poor half-clothed *gamin* the place nearest the *chauffrette* (fire she had none), while Mademoiselle Berthe made the apartment on the second floor too hot to hold him. Madame Grégoire,—whose only daughter was the wife of a puppet-showman, and whose only grandson, a seller of sparrows *rouged et noired* into bullfinches, or whitewashed into canaries, on the Pont Neuf,—transferred a considerable portion of her unclaimed dividends of maternal tenderness to the little orphan. Her son was a soldier, serving (as she said) at Algiers in the Indies, and by no means likely to enter into rivalship with the slave of Monsieur Georges and Mademoiselle Berthe's household.

"'Tis a strange thing, my dear child," mumbled the old woman to Guguste, as they sat down toge-

ther one day to their six o'clock soup (a composition of hot water, cabbage-stalks, half an ounce of bacon, and a peck of salt), "that so long as I have held the string* in this house, not a drop of wine, either in piece or bottle, has ever gone through the gateway to the address of Monsieur Georges! Every month comes the supply of chocolate from Marquise's for Monsieur, and from the Golden Bee a cargo of Bourbon coffee and beet-root sugar for the housekeeper;—but of wine not a pint."

"Neither Georges nor the Dragon are honest souls enough to trust themselves with their cups," said the knowing *gamin*. "Wine tells truth, they say. None but an ass talks now-a-days of truth lying at the bottom of a well;—'tis in the bottom of a hogshead of claret. Ma'mselle Berthe, who can do nothing but lie, is the liar in the well. *She* can't keep her head above water."

"But Monsieur Georges, who need entertain no fear of making too free with his own secrets after a glass or two, inasmuch as no living mortal

* The business of a porter in Paris is to open the gates of the house to comers and goers after dusk, by means of a cord, which is fixed in the lodge.

ever dips with him in the dish,—surely Monsieur might indulge on Sundays, and fête days, and the like?"

"And so he does indulge, Madame Grégoire, —so he does! Some folks like their champagne, some their burgundy. Master loves to take an internal hot-bath after the English fashion."

"A tea-drinker? *sacristie!* what effeminacy!" exclaimed the old woman, bravely swallowing, out of a spoon of *métal d'Alger*, a large mouthful of tepid water. "I recollect seeing tea made upon the stage, in the farce of 'Madame Pochet et Madame Gibou.' *Jésu!* what nastiness! I really wonder at Monsieur Georges! So spruce and so cleanly a gentleman as he looks, when, every evening, just as St Philip's church chimes the half-hour after seven, '*Le cordon, s'il vous plait,*' gives me notice of his exit! His superfine blue coat and garnet-coloured velvet waistcoat without a speck of dust upon them——"

"Thanks to *me!*" interposed Guguste.

"His *toupet* shining with *huile antique*——"

"Thanks to *me!*" continued Guguste.

"His boots varnished like looking-glasses——"

"Thanks to me!" pursued Guguste.

"His hat smoothed as with an iron——"

"Thanks to *me*,—thanks to *me!*"

"His *jabot* plaited as if by machinery, and white as snow; while his great diamond studs look out like eyes of fire from the frilling——"

"Thanks to—no, not thanks to *me!*" cried Guguste. "I must own that Ma'mselle Berthe, who is so much in the starch line, still presides in the washing and ironing department; and, as to the brilliants, which you say shine in the dark like cats' eyes, master keeps them like the apple of his own."

"I wonder what makes him so wonderful particular about his dress after nightfall?" said Madame Grégoire, peering through her spectacles into the face which she was preparing to cross-examine. "Humph?"

"Can't say," replied Guguste, tilting the soup-tureen to transfer the last drop of warm salt-water to his own plate.

"You mean *won't;* you *could* fast enough if you would, child!" said Madame Grégoire pettishly.

"Bah!" cried the *gamin* (who was perhaps of opinion that the kicks, which, more than half-

pence, constituted his salary in Monsieur Georges' service, formed a tie upon his discretion), "how can *you*, Ma'me Grégoire, who are such a very sensible woman, imagine it possible, that while I am clearing away the dinner things down stairs in the porter's lodge, or up stairs in Ma'mselle Berthe's chamber, I can have an eye to master's proceedings after he has crossed his threshold!— Maybe he goes to the Opera."—

"Three nights in the week. But the other four?"

"There are fifteen theatres open, as I've heard tell, in the city and the suburbs," quoth Guguste drily.

"But gentlemen as *is* gentlemen (which is what Monsieur Georges calls himself, however he may be called by others), don't put on diamond studs and embroidered waistcoats to go to the playhouses!"

"Don't they?—How should I know?"—demanded Guguste, polishing the pewter spoon on his sleeve as he was accustomed to do those of his master's double-threaded silver. "What do I see of playhouses?"

"Why, you ungrateful child! didn't I give you

a ticket for the pit of the Porte St Martin, for that moving piece, 'The Spectre Abbot,' on the night of Ma'mselle Isoline's benefit, the deputy-double of the general-utility *jeune première*, who lodges up stairs in the back attic, next but one to your own?"

"Yes, — I saw 'The Spectre Abbot,' and Ma'mselle Isoline into the bargain, with three-quarters of a yard of red calico hanging to her waist, to represent the 'Bleeding Nun.' But I didn't take no notice whether the gentlemen whose elbows were jammed into my sides wore diamond studs or velvet waistcoats."

"At all events you must perceive that the highly-respectable gentleman who occupies our splendid first-floor apartment (Monsieur Boncoeur, the deputy), goes out every evening in his carriage in a very different costume?"

"Monsieur Boncoeur, in his carriage, need not hoist a flag of gentility. Monsieur Georges, on foot, might be hustled off the pavement but for his brilliants."

"More likely *for* them," said the porteress.

"Besides, Monsieur Boncoeur is, as you say, such a very respectable-looking gentleman! His

dark, square-cut coat, and pepper-and-salts; his broad-brimmed hat, and sad-coloured gloves; his whole outward man seems to have been taken measure of as the picture of respectability! And see what that very respectability has brought him to!—Partner in one of the first houses in the Rue Bergère;—deputy in the chamber;—*marguillier* of the parish;—a ribbon in his button-hole;—and the picture of himself and his ribbon face to face with the portrait of Louis Philippe, at the gallery of the Exposition, for all the world as if they'd a little word to say to each other in public!—Lord bless you!—Monsieur Boncoeur's respectable grey whiskers, respectable speckled stockings, respectable great-coat and umbrella, are worth a couple of hundred thousand francs a-year to the banking-house in the Rue Bergère, as vouchers for the square-toeishness of the firm!"

"Lord love thee, child, at thy years how shouldst thou know so much of the world!" cried Madame Grégoire, removing her spectacles after this tirade, as if all further perspicacity were superfluous.

"By being thrown upon it from the moment I had years to count," cried the urchin. "A foundling hospital, Ma'me Grég, is a famous whetstone,

against which no one can rub without sharpening his wits!"

"But, since thine are so sharp, boy, how comes it thou hast never discovered whither Monsieur Georges directs his steps every evening, winter and summer, at half-past seven?"

"Because 'tis my business to know, and I prefer my pleasure. I've some sort of *right*, you see, to interest myself in master's proceedings; but in those of Monsieur Boncoeur of the first floor, Ma'mselle Isoline of the attic, Madame la Baronne de Gimbecque, the pretty lady with the handsome *cachemires*, *coupé*, and black eyes, who lodges in the *entresol*, and Madame Courson, the widow lady, on the *troisième*, I've nothing but wrong; and, accordingly, not a step do they take with which I am not conversant. I could tell you, if you wanted to know, where Madame Courson's poor, little, pale, patient daughter, Mademoiselle Claire——"

"Thank ye,—thank ye! I fancy I know more of my lodgers than *you* do! All I ask you is, concerning your master. Monsieur Georges is the only inmate of this house for whom it has ever been my fortune to pull the string without

discovering, before the end of the first term, the source of his income, where he came from, whither he was going, and——"

"Good evening, grandmamma!" squeaked a voice at the moveable pane of the glass-door,—the arrow-slit, or *meurtrière*, through which every porteress is privileged to parley with visitors at meal-times or in windy weather.

"'Tis Dodo!" exclaimed Guguste, rising to open the latch for the lean and impish-looking grandson of Madame Grégoire, whose wistful glances in eyeing the empty tureen plainly indicated that his visit had been miscalculated by a quarter of an hour.

"Mother desired me to call and inquire after the rheumatic pain in your right shoulder," continued Dodo, the short for Dodore, which is short for Theodore, in cockney Parisian.

"'Twas in my left, and it has left me," said the old woman peevishly; "and don't sit on that chair, child. The knitting-needles in the stocking may do you a mischief.—How 's your mother?"

"Mamma's got a cold, sitting out in the showers yesterday afternoon, to finish shaving a poodle

which a customer was werry particular to get done in time to go out to dinner."

"Humph! I fancied, Dodo, *you* had taken that part of the business off her hands? I thought she made over the scissors to you at Michaelmas last?"—

"And so she did for anything of plain work," replied the brat; "but this was a choice customer, and a bit of fancy work; a great big grey *barbet*, which stands as high as a rocking-horse, whose master is curious in his shaving. The gentleman's a poet, what does the off-nights *romantique* for Victor Hugo's plaything playhouse at the Porte St Antoine; and, as the vulgars is apt to have their poodles lion-fashion, Monsieur Eugène gives his'n a mane and forelock; which, with cropped ears, looks for all the world like a unicorn!"

"What an ass!" cried Madame Grégoire contemptuously, tapping her snuff-box. "These poet and player folk makes themselves notorious, and fancies themselves famous!"

"And how goes on your own business, Dodo?" demanded Guguste, assuming in the presence of

the starveling of nine years old, the airs of a man of the world.

"Pretty smart, thank ye. I've just set up two new sparrow-traps in a ditch under the barrack-wall at Montrouge; and last week I sold a pair of as fine canaries as a coating of plaster of Paris and gamboge could make 'em, to a fine English lady in a carriage, as was crossing the bridge to the flower-market. Gave the brace of birds for nine francs, one of which I slipped into the hand of her *laquais de place.* But then I was out of business for three days a'twards for fear of the police."

"Dodo, you'll be disgracing your family one of these days by being took up!"—said Madame Grégoire impressively. "I remember my respectable first-floor, Monsieur Boncoeur, bringing home a piping bullfinch last year he 'd bought on the Boulevarts, whose red breast washed off the first showery day, all as one as Ma'mselle Isoline's rouge after a flood of tears in a melodrame! The poor dear gentleman had half a mind to have up the seller of the impositious bird before the commissary of the district; only, as he'd paid for it with an old coat unbeknownst to his valet, and an old coat not being lawful coin of the realm, there

was a doubt in his mind about his power of bringing the vagabond to justice."

"Which?—Himself, or the impositious bird,—or the industrious fowler as was arning a living for his family?"—inquired Guguste.

"Hush!" cried Madame Grégoire, laying her hand on the cord as Monsieur Georges' thin voice was heard giving utterance to his usual evening cry of "*Le cordon!*" Guguste slunk behind her high-backed chair as his tyrant passed the window,—his withered, sallow face enlivened by his gold-mounted spectacles, and his mean person coquetted into consequence perforce of velvet and trinkets. Burnished from top to toe, he was the very moral of one of Giroux's toys, the very *im*moral of a *chevalier d'industrie.*

Certain that his master's exit would be the signal for his being fetched out of that, by the shrill summons of Ma'mselle Berthe to set the place in order, and make up the fire (against the arrival of her cousin, Madame Dondin, an ex-box-opener of the Ambigua Comique, who occupied a chamber in the story above, and was admitted to the honour of seeing her prim relative play patience, and of sipping a glass of sugar and water

with her on a long winter's evening), Guguste flitted upward to the discharge of his duties, leaving the skinny imp of the Pont Neuf and his grandam to commune of domestic matters. While waiting the summons of Monsieur Boncoeur's demure-looking footman to open the gate for the demure-looking chariot of that highly demure and respectable individual, Madame Grégoire accordingly interrogated the boy concerning his father's absence from the sweets of his domestic hearth.

"Papa is making a tour in the south," replied the imp. "He passed the summer in the Pyrenees. The Pyrenees are quite in fashion in papa's line of business!"

"Ay, 'tis well for him that Gothon likes him to lead such a rambling life!" said Madame Grégoire in a moralizing tone. "When my poor daughter thought proper to marry a showman, I told her how it would be! To think, now, of a child of mine, a respectable *portière* in the same house, of the same parish, for forty years' standing."

"The house?"

"The *house*, ignoramus! — The house is a century old, built by the Regent Duke of Orleans,

father of his unfortunate majesty, Louis XIV, as you might read in history,—if you knew how to read.—To think of a child of mine, I say, squatting on a wooden stool, like a wild Indian, winter and summer, with nothing but a cold river under her feet, and cold oil-cloth over her head, on the look-out for a poodle in want of clipping, or some mouse-eaten-out-of-house-and-home baker in want of a tabby kitten!—I protest I never think of my poor Gothon and her stock-in-trade,—her cage of cats on one side, and her string of puppies on the other,—without bitter anguish of soul. Why can't your father stay at home, Dodore, and set up in the Champs Elysées, or at the *barrières*, to be nearer home, like other respectable men of his profession?"

"Bless your heart!" remonstrated Dodo, "papa took up his station three years ago, on the way along the Allée d'Antin, to the Suspension Bridge. But it all but made a bankrupt of him! There was too much competition. Pierre, the Savoyard, who had his show-box within fifty yards, had such a winning way with him, that not a nurse-maid, or English lord coming out of Lepage's shooting-gallery, but used to throw

silver to Pierre, where papa took only the brownest of copper. At last, a nasty, good-for-nothing, designing Jesuit of a fellow set up in opposition to both on 'em; Scripture pieces, with Jepfa's daughters, and Dalily and Goliar, a hand-organ, and Dutch pug as held an old hat, and what not. Papa bore it as long as he was able; but what was the good of opposition atween friends? He'd nothing in his box but worn-out things, as old as Methusalem or Jerusalem, or whatever it is, such as the battle of Marengo, and the Pyramids, and the landing of Xerxes in the Hellyspunt, and a pack of low-lived fancies. So mamma persuaded him to try the provinces (where, as all the world knows, the stalest bread goes down); and so, from fair to fair, he's been touring it this twelvemonth."

"Poor Gothon!"

"Mamma doesn't fret. She says I shall soon be old enough to take papa's business off his shoulders, and then he'll be able to retire comfortable; and she'll give up her stall on the Pont Neuf, and the kitten and canary line, to sister Mary."

Madame Grégoire was about to remonstrate

against this perpetuation of open-air commerce in her posterity, when Monsieur Boncoeur's signal was given, and lo, the well-varnished, well-stuffed, but plain chariot of the thriving banker, rolled after his fat and bean-fed horses out of the court-yard.

Some minutes afterwards, his portly *femme de ménage*, Madame Alexandre, stepped into the lodge for a few minutes' gossip with the porteress previous to proceeding to her evening's Boston with the grocer's lady at the opposite corner. The comely housekeeper, in her silk-cloak and bonnet, was naturally an object of dislike and envy to the withered *portière*, in her ragged merino gown, and dingy calico cap. But Christmas was approaching. Her *étrennes* for New Year's Day (to the sum total of which, the first-floor contributed three-fourths) were seldom absent from Madame Grégoire's calculations. Besides, Monsieur Boncoeur's housekeeper was to be conciliated as a connecting link in her chain of domestic investigation. For Madame Alexandre not only afforded her quota of information concerning her own and her master's affairs, but, in pure prying-ness of spirit, contrived to see through stone

walls, and hear down chimneys, while striving to put this and that together concerning those of her fellow-lodgers.

"Well, Madame Grégoire, what is the best news with us this evening!" demanded the jolly dame, as soon as the porteress had despatched her hungry grandson home to his mamma, the kittens and canaries. "I'm just stepping out, you see, for my little game with the Pruins. Poor people, they can't do without me! If I were not with them before the clock struck eight, I should be having them here after me; and to be filling the house with visitors during master's absence, is a thing I'm not in the habit of doing, as nobody knows better than yourself. Indeed, it's a matter of conscience that takes me out the moment his back is turned. As a *femme de confiance*, I'm bound to see there's no waste; and where there's visitors there *must* be tippling and stuffing; so, out of regard to Monsieur Boncoeur's property, I'm seldom in the house ten minutes after him. I hope I know my duty by so respectable a master better than to make away with his goods like Ma'mselle Berthe up yonder, who keeps open house like a lady, with as many rings at her bells of an evening as

e'er a duchess in the land! But, as I was saying, Madame Grégoire,—(dearee me! I thought I wasn't by no means comfortable! I've been sitting on the knitting-needles!)—as I was saying, have you made out anything further about them Coursons?"

"Scarce a syllable more than the first day they took possession! One knowed they was respectable, 'cause our perprietor is exceeding particular about references,—(there isn't a partic'larer landlord from one end of the Boulevarts to t'other!)—and one knowed they was poor, 'cause their moveables came on a porter's truck, instead of occupying a cart and horse, as becomes a creditable lodger, or instead of occupying three vans of the *administration des déménagemens*, as was the case, I remember, when our respectable first-floor moved in."

Madame Alexandre smiled a neat and appropriate smile of acknowledgment for her master; while the porteress took breath, a pinch of snuff, and proceeded.

"But as to their origin, and sitch, I know no more than Adam! Not an acquaintance in the parish!—I even put the water-carrier upon asking

about the neighbourhood; but no such name as Courson was ever heard of!—How do we know, pray, who we've got among us?—Courson may be a sham name, such as we reads of in Paul de Kock's novels!"

"Such rubbish, indeed!" said Madame Alexandre, with a sneer, intended, like the epithet, to apply to the lodgers on the third floor, ignored by the water-carrier and public houses in the neighbourhood, *not* to Monsieur Paul de Kock's novels, which were probably familiar to them all.

"Would you believe it, ma'am? there's the saucy minx of a daughter (Ma'mselle Claire, I think, you told me was her name,) has the owdacity to bid me good morning or good evening if I haps to meet her on the stairs, affable-like, as if she felt me her inferior!—Now I don't know, Ma'me Grégoire, what your opinion may be, but *I* holds (and so does my friends, the Pruins) that the upper domestics of the first-floor, is on a quality with the lodgers of the third, that keeps no domestics at all."

"Certainly, ma'am, certainly," replied the porteress, still harping on the amount of her New Year's gift. "But have you made out nothing of

these people's occupations? You're two floors nigher to 'em than me. If I was in *your* place——"

"If you was in that of the housekeeper of Monsieur Georges, you mean! Ma'mselle Berthe's store-closet looks clean into Ma'mselle Claire's room."

"Looks dirty in," emended the prying porteress.

"And, if Ma'mselle Berthe wasn't as dry as a handful of deal shavings, maybe I might have demeaned myself to ask her in a friendly way how the young lady passed her mornings. But Ma'mselle Berthe (the *chipie!*) condescends to hold just about as much communication with me as one of the chayney mandarins on the top of master's cabinet, — shakes her head by way of salutation, and not a word!"

"But, Guguste (Monsieur Georges's little lad of all work and no play) assured me he saw Ma'mselle Courson ring at Monsieur Boncoeur's bell the other day, and deliver a letter to the footman?"

"Oho! that dirty little *gamin* plays the spy upon those who rings at Monsieur Boncoeur's

bell, do he?" cried the housekeeper, reddening.

"But, my dear madam, my dear friend," whined the porteress in a tone of deprecation, "did not you yourself inform me that Monsieur Boncoeur's footman carried up on Sunday se'nnight, by Monsieur Boncoeur's desire, to Ma'mselle Claire, a box of apricot marmalade, and the last number of the '*Follet?*"

"I said no such thing, ma'am, as I remember. The marmalade and the journal was both lawfully directed to Madame Courson. I never so much as insinnivated a word of an intention of attention to Mademoiselle!"

"Then I miscomprehended, ma'am; in which I'm the more to blame, because, from the highly respectable character of the mansion for which I have the honour to pull the string, (there isn't, as I said before, a more partic'larer landlord than the proprietor from one end of the Boulevarts to t'other,) I might have known that even the letters of a gentleman so distinguished as my first-floor would never have been received by Ma'mselle, the daughter of Madame Courson."

"*That's* all you know about it,—is it?" cried the housekeeper, crimsoning with pique. "Then be so good as to tell me what makes such a young lady as Ma'mselle, Madame Courson's daughter, write written letters to so distinguished a gentleman as your first-floor?"

"She couldn't be guilty of anything so heinous!" cried the porteress, aghast.

"I tell you she *was!*"

"You *must* be mistaken."

"Seeing is believing, Madame Grégoire!"

"Ay! you may have seen her *deliver* a written letter, poor dear,—from her mamma, in all probability?"—

"No such thing!—from herself."

"Now, how can you possibly know? Did you see her write it? Do you even know her handwriting?"—

"I know her signature,—'Claire de Courson;' and you told me your wery self, that the agreement for the lodgings was signed by her mother as 'Emilie de Courson.'"

"But the signature was inside the written letter. How could you see *that?*"

"No matter! I *did* see it with my two eyes as plain as I see you."

"And that's plain enough," muttered Guguste, who, having crept back unobserved into the room, was skulking in a corner.

"Why, sure you didn't go to peep?" said the porteress, with a knowing look of inquiry and accusation.

"What a one you are!" cried Madame Alexandre, trying to turn off jocularly her self-betrayal. "But, not to haggle with partic'lars of how the letter came into my hands, into my hands it came; and what should it be but a private confidential *tête-à-tête* epistle from the young lady, saying how Monsieur Boncoeur's reputation for benevolence was up in the neighbourhood, and how he seemed inclined to befriend her poor mother (the apricot marmalade, you know!) and how it would be a great charity (no, not charity, —act of humanity the shabby-genteels calls it) if he would exert his interest to procure for her mamma a privilege to sell stamps, a *bureau de papier timbré;* for which, of course, his petitioner was ever bound to pray, and so forth."

"I hope they don't think of setting up anything

in the shop or office line in a house like ours?" cried Madame Grégoire, with dignity. "They'll find theirself plaguily out of their reckoning!—for I must say it, who shouldn't say it, that there isn't a more partic'larer landlord ——"

"I'll just tell you what," ruthlessly interrupted Madame Alexandre, twitching her silk cloak, as if meditating departure. "To-night's Monday, you know—"

"Yes, I *do* know."

"And that's the reception-night, you know, of the Minister of the Home Department—"

"No, I didn't know."

"And, as sure as life——"

"Lord lovee, Ma'me Alexandre, don't use that profane expression,—there's nothing less sure than life!"—cried Madame G. while Auguste groaned in the background.

"As sure as a gun, then——"

Again Auguste groaned.

"—Master's gone this evening to the hotel of the *Ministre de l'Interieur*, to present Ma'mselle Claire's petition for a stamp-office."

"Do you raally think things of that sort are done in that sort of straight-for'ard way?"—de-

manded the porteress. "*I* fancied that, when you wanted anything of government, you got a word said for you to the cousin of some clerk-of-a-deputy-to-an-under-commissioner, with, maybe, a genteel little offering to make it go down,—such as a Savoy cake, or a China rose-tree in a flower-pot."

"Nonsense! You're thinking of folks of your own species," said the housekeeper, disdainfully. "You forget that my master, Monsieur Boncoeur, is a representative of the nation, a governor of the Bank of France, and a *marguillier* of the parish. Master 's a right to go straight an end to the king, and tell his majesty any little wish he may have ungratified. And, if he *should* think proper to mention to Louis Philippe, Ma'mselle Claire's desire that her mamma should set up a bureau for stamps, her business is done!"

They were interrupted by the starting up of Guguste, who was crouching behind them, and placed an admonitory finger on his lip to impose silence upon Madame Grégoire's meditated rejoinder, just as a very white hand, holding a very black key, was intruded into the room through the porter's window; and the silvery accents of

Mademoiselle Courson were heard, announcing to the porteress that she was going out for half-an-hour; and that, though her mother remained at home, she was indisposed, and could receive no visitors.

"*Visitors*, indeed! Who ever comes to visit *them*, I should like to know!" muttered Madame Grégoire, after pulling the *cordon* to admit of the young lady's egress.

She certainly *had* a bundle under her arm!"—cried Madame Alexandre, who had been watching the young lady through the window. "Now, how I *should* like to know where she 's going."

"To the pharmacy, for medicine for her mother, or to the herborist for lime-blossoms, to make *tisanne*," said Guguste, who shrewdly anticipated a request on the part of the elderly ladies that he would arise and play the spy upon the movements of Mademoiselle Claire.

"Pho! pho! The old lady's only trouble-sick, which would be a deal worse than body-sick, only that it don't require no physic," observed the porteress.

"Then she's gone to the laundress."

"Laundress indeed!"—cried the fat house-

keeper; "as if low-lived people like the third-floor wasn't their own laundress!"

"Pardon me, my dear Ma'me Alexandre,"—cried the porteress. "You know we don't allow no hanging out in *this* house. There's not a more partic'larer landlord in——"

"'Tis my true and honest belief," interrupted the lady in the silk cloak, "that the girl is gone to the Mont de Piété! I said to Robert, our footman, when he was taking up master's apricot marmalade, that 'twould be a deal more to the purpose if he took up a good dish of cutlets, or a *fricandeau;* for, as you and I was agreeing t' other day, my dear Ma'me Grégoire, not an ounce of anything eatable beyond daily bread ever goes up these blessed stairs to the third-floor. And, what's more, I've noticed strange changes in Miss and Madam since they took up in the house. I don't mean in point of growing thin and meagre, 'cause care alone, without starving, will bring the poor body of a poor soul down to nothing. But, the day as their goods came in, Ma'mselle Courson had as good a cloak over her shoulders as the one on mine (which cost

me a good hundred and thirty livres in the Passage de Lorme), and Ma'mselle Claire's having a velvet collar doubtless might be counted at twenty more.—What's become of it I should like to know?"

"Ay, what's become of it, eh?" added the porteress, tapping her box.

"*Certes*, people that *has* a comfortable cloak is apt to put it on such nights as this!" rejoined the housekeeper; "but I say nothing."

"The young lady may have lent it to her mamma, who is indisposed," pleaded Guguste. "Fuel is ris' within the week. I don't suppose they've too much fire."

"Lent it to her mamma, indeed!" cried Madame Alexandre. "Why, Madame Courson has as handsome a Thibet shawl as ever came out of Ternaux's factory."

"*Had*," emended the porteress. "I haven't seen the red shawl on her shoulders these three weeks. On that point, I has my suspicions."

A single rap, Parisian-wise, at the *porte cochère*, produced the usual professional tug at the *cordon*.

The gate flew open; and, peeping in at the window-pane, was seen the rubicund face of Monsieur Paul Emile Pruin, the grocer, come in search of his loitering guest.

"So, so, so!" cried he, on detecting her in the thick of gossip with the grandmamma of Dodore. "*This* is the way you keep your appointments, *ma belle voisine?*—Haven't we had the hearth made up these three quarters of an hour, candles snuffed (*bougies de l'étoile*, always a-snuffing!) a fresh bottle of *groseille frambroisée* ready to be uncorked, and a batch of *biscuits de Rheims* ready to be opened?—Saw *Monsieur le Député's* carriage bowl out, and been hoping ever since to see you bowl in. Poor Madame Paul in the fidgets, as if she'd swallowed a flight of swallows,—up and down,—in and out. Sent me over with the umbrella to look after you."

"Thank you, — thank you!" cried Madame Alexandre. "'Tis the first of the month you see," she continued, winking at the blind old porteress (to whom a nod and wink were much alike) to back her apologies. "I'd my little postage account to settle with my good friend here.—But now I'm at your service.—*Allons!*"

"Guguste, my dear, show the lantern to Madame Alexandre over the *ruisseau*," said the porteress, turning round to look for her boarder. But Guguste had disappeared. He had perhaps sneaked away to track the mysterious footsteps of Mademoiselle de Courson.

SKETCH II.

Paris is the only city in Europe where a prize is annually distributed for the encouragement of Virtue. In England—that Joseph Surface of the civilized globe—we give premiums for the growth of fat sheep and piccotees, we boast of prize-oxen and prize-heartsease; but at present we have no prize-virtue. The celebrated benefaction founded by Monsieur de Monthyon (confided to the administration of the French Academy) consists in annual premiums for the production of the finest trait of moral excellence, and the literary work best calculated to promote its recurrence.

Now, Monsieur Boncoeur, of the first-floor of the corner of the Rue Montmartre, might have monopolised the whole Monthyon endowment for

the last fifteen years. The whole man was an incarnate virtue. His works, literary or literal, were based upon the strictest morality. From his top-knot to his shoe-tie, propriety predominated. Methodical in his hours and diet, regular as a chronometer in despatch of business, he insured his own ease of mind and body by scrupulous exactitude in the discharge of their duties and pleasures. His apartment was a model of commodiousness,—doors and windows shutting to a hair; not a draught of air, not a creaking hinge, not an unsteady table, not a hard-shutting drawer, not an easy-opening lock, in the whole suite.

The floors in summer were as polished as their master's demeanour, the carpets in winter as soft as his address. No grand displays of fragile luxury, of Japan porcelain or Bohemian glass, alarmed the anxieties of Monsieur Boncoeur's constituency. It was the "comfortable" in perfection,—but nothing more.

What wonder that a man thus basking in the sunshine of prudent prosperity should bask in the favour of the world?—that such an ornament to society should be incorporated in all the learned

and charitable societies of the city?—that so worthy a fellow should be a fellow of every academy and literary association?—A string of conventional distinctions was attached to Boncoeur's name, vying in length with the catalogue of chivalric honours appended in German almanacks to that of Prince Metternich; but, what was more to the purpose, the patronymic thus honoured was inscribed in every public stock or fund, domestic or foreign. His house was a house of universal bondage. Not a railroad could be started by government till Boncoeur had been closeted in the stuffy, fussy, great-talking-little-doing cabinet of the Home Department; nor a minister accredited, till he had hinted his hints and inferred his inferences in the sphinxical blue-chamber of the Foreign. The worsted epaulettes of the citizen king, were observed to bow lower to their excellent and much-esteemed friend Monsieur Boncoeur than to any other of the golden calves invited to feed and ruminate at the royal rack and manger of the Tuileries.

Of all the inhabitants of the house whose *cordon* was pulled by Madame Grégoire, Boncoeur may

be considered as at once the least and the most domestic. His business lay elsewhere,—his pleasures lay elsewhere; it was only his respectability that lodged in ostentatious comfort in the first-floor of that memorable dwelling. He knew and cared nothing concerning the neighbours. On his progress from his apartment to his carriage, from his carriage back to his apartment, the banker's countenance expressed only a mild, imperturbable magnanimity; looking neither to the right nor left, but enwrapt in reminiscences of the panacean speech he had been delivering to the Chamber, in proof to the kingdom that it paid no taxes, but lay stretched upon a bed of roses. One day, however, when his ascent happened to be more mercurial than usual, he came suddenly in contact with Claire de Courson, whose slight figure was bending under the weight of a piece of furniture which she was carrying up to her mother's room; and her pure complexion became suffused with the deepest blushes as she acknowledged and declined his polite offers of assistance in her task. Next day, Robert the footman, who had been deputed to relieve her from the burthen of the

elbow-chair, was commissioned to convey the "Follet" and apricot marmalade in the same direction.

Till that memorable epoch, the virtuous Monsieur Boncoeur had remained ignorant that the house contained so powerful an incentive to the fulfilment of the Christian commandment to love his neighbour as himself. But it was not too late. The banker was fond of apricot marmalade, and partial to the prettinesses of a fashionable magazine, his fair neighbour of an age to share his predilections; and in presenting these saccharine offerings, he did as he would be done by. The virtuous Monsieur Boncoeur was too painfully aware, however, of the scandal-mongering propensities of a sinful world to entrust to the remarks of a common staircase and porter's lodge the visits of a bachelor first-floor to a single third-floor, with large grey eyes, and long black eyelashes. His respectable Robert, a corpulent middle-aged footman, might in the first instance represent his high-principled principal, without provoking the espionage of Ma'mselle Berthe, or the commentations of Madame Grégoire. In the intimacy he hoped to establish, all the advances must come down stairs.

The man after the king's own heart was too prudent to stir a single step upwards.

Beyond the door of the antechamber, however, which was opened by Mademoiselle de Courson in person, the corpulent footman did not penetrate. The young lady returned, in her mother's name, a civil answer of acknowledgment to their wealthy neighbour, stating that the infirmities of her mother's health rendered it impossible for them to receive visitors. The corpulent footman, despising these wretched people, — as wretched people who keep no establishment of servants ought to be despised by a corpulent footman, immediately settled it in his own mind that the apartment was too shabby and littered to admit of receiving a gentleman of such far-famed respectability as the eminent banker of the Rue Bergère; that the Coursons' furniture was probably mean,— their fare meagre. The utmost stretch of his pampered imagination did not conjecture that their fare consisted of their furniture,—that ever since Madame's arrival with the truck, she had been dining on chairs and breakfasting on feather-beds. Not a soul in the house (except Guguste) had at present noticed that the *meubles* carried

down and conveyed away to be "mended," never found their way back again.

Small as were the appetites of the third-floor, it is extremely difficult to feed and lodge two full-grown human beings upon a pension of forty pounds a-year; and, by the recent failure of the notary in whose hands the small funds of Madame de Courson were deposited, this was all that remained to support her and her daughter. On the discovery of their misfortune, indeed, Claire had undertaken to increase her own and her mother's daily bread by assiduous needle-work; but the constant attendance required by the poor and sorrowful invalid rendered it difficult for her daughter to fulfil her good intentions. Till the loss of their property, they had resided, in tolerable comfort, in cheerful rooms on the Quai Voltaire, assisted by an effective servant, but all this had been perforce resigned, — the best part of their goods was sold off, their wardrobe stript of its luxuries; and Claire was fully justified in undertaking, as she did, the service of the kitchen and pantry, for it was clear that their diet must henceforward consist of bread and water.

Like most poor people, they were proud; and

pride served to increase their privations. Madame de Courson, the widow of an officer, one of the victims of the Russian campaign, had never yet solicited a pecuniary favour from living mortal. She preferred working for her livelihood, or starving; that is, she preferred that her daughter should work for their livelihood, and consequently that they should starve together. It must be owned (*par parenthèse*) that the only favours tendered to her acceptance since she took up her domicile in the corner house, where Monsieur Boncoeur's gift of apricot marmalade and loan of a journal, and poor Guguste's earnest entreaty to Mademoiselle, into whose acquaintance he had intruded by carrying up Madame de Courson's first and last batch of wood, to be permitted to black her shoes, and perform other little neighbourly offices of similar delicacy.

When, however, the shoes grew thinner and thinner, without being replaced, his aid was more rarely accepted, and at length positively declined; and little Guguste, who was more a man of the world than the corpulent footman, justly concluded that Mademoiselle Claire did not like to expose her attempts at repairing the inevitable

fissures to the comments of Monsieur Georges's lad of all work. Still, though tacitly dismissed from her service, the grey-eyed beauty never passed him on the stairs without a word or smile of recognition, even when her heart was sorest and countenance saddest; for Guguste had installed himself her friend. It remained to be seen whether the donor of the apricot marmalade would prove as true a one as the young shoeblack.

Be it not inferred, however, that the amiable attentions of the ragamuffin page were paid solely as a tribute to beauty; they were a tribute to beauty in distress. There were two other particles of the fair sex resident under the same roof, whom most lads of his age would have preferred to the grey-eyed nymph of the third floor, viz. Madame la Baronne de Gimbecque, a pretty widow, somewhere between twenty-five and fifty years of age, for in a well-dressed widow it is extremely difficult to determine a woman's age within ten years or so,—none but a lady's husband being admitted to investigate the case before she

adores,
With head uncover'd, the cosmetic powers;

and Madame la Baronne de Gimbecque's coquettish waiting-maid, Mademoiselle Aglaé. But for neither of these divinities of the *entresol* had Guguste ever felt inspired with an inclination to wield the blacking-brush! Not that either the widow or the maid was at any moment guilty of a *chaussure* susceptible of such plebeian enhancement.—Madame la Baronne walked not only in silk attire, but silken shoes; while Ma'mselle Aglaé, like Lear's soldiers, was shod with felt, shuffling in slippers all the morning, and reserving prunella or satin for her visits, play-goings, and *bals masqués*.

Madame la Baronne, with a fortune of thirty thousand francs, or twelve hundred pounds, per annum, would have passed in London for a widow of moderate means, and might perhaps have speculated on improving them by marriage. In Paris, she passed for a rich one, and occupied herself with her amusement. It is amazing how much pleasure may be purchased in that circumscript capital at the rate of one hundred pounds per month, particularly in the state of blessedness which is called single.

Conscious of her advantage, Madame de Gim-

becque was far from anxious to inscribe herself in the register of lodgers in the Rue Montmartre by double entry. France is peculiar in its views of wedded happiness. In England, what is called a well-assorted marriage implies parity of condition, and compatibility of temper; in Paris, it implies equality of fortune. Five thousand a-year proposes to five thousand a-year,—three hundred per annum to three hundred; not Lord Thomas to Miss Sophia, or plain Tom to pretty Sophy. Beauty, harp-playing, quadrilling, have nothing to do with it,—all is matter of arithmetic! If the match turn out ill, it is no fault of the match-makers; all has been done according to Cocker.

Now Madame la Baronne, like most Frenchwomen, was a capital calculatress. She knew that, though Sophy and Tom are richer with six hundred a-year between them than Sophy with three and Tom with the same pittance, a pretty Madame de Gimbecque, between twenty-five and fifty years of age, is richer as a widow with thirty thousand francs per annum, than as the wife of a man of fashion with sixty. To espouse any man, *un*-fashionable, was out of the question,—that is, any man unfashionable with an income only equal to

her own. A Crœsus of any age or calling would have brought his own apology; and she would have added herself and her establishment to that of the respectable banker of the Rue Bergère at a moment's notice. But that consummation was past praying for. A Crœsus would require a Crœsa as his partner for life, as surely as the primitive lion trotted side by side with a lioness into Noah's ark; and Monsieur Boncoeur, if matrimonially inclined, would demand hundreds of thousands per annum to amalgamate with his hundreds of thousands.

The charming Adolphes and exquisite Amédées, meanwhile, frequenting Madame de Gimbecque's opera-box, or ambling by her side in the Bois de Boulogne, had either not an unmortgaged estate wherewith to pretend to her hand, or, if successful pretendants, would appropriate after marriage to their own gratification, not only their own thirty thousand, but three-fourths of hers. Very early in her widowhood Madame de Gimbecque came to this conclusion; and, on giving utterance at her toilet, as she threw off her widow's weeds, to her anti-matrimonial intentions, they were confirmed by Mademoiselle Aglaé with so loud an

"amen," that a by-stander might have supposed them two lay-nuns pronouncing vows of eternal celibacy.

Madame de Gimbecque, though thus egoistical in her calculations, was nevertheless a light-hearted, good-humoured little woman, who, if she did not go out of her way to do good, did all the good that lay in it. She had been born, bred, married, and widowed according to that matter-of-fact social system of the French, which leaves no space for the expansion of the feelings. Nothing like affection had graced her parents' household,—nothing like affection had warmed her own. Her fifteen thousand francs per annum had been married to those of an ex-colonel of cuirassiers, thirty years her senior, who had pretty nearly scolded, sworn, smoked, and expectorated his pretty wife out of patience, when the sour little cherub who sits up aloft keeping watch over matrimonial destinies, took pity on the lady, and took the colonel to itself.

Madame de Gimbecque (then *not* between fifty and five-and-twenty, but between five-and-twenty and fifteen), though an orphan as well as a widow, consoled herself as thoroughly as propriety

would admit, for this sudden bereavement. She had neither a tie nor a relative in the world. But what pretty Parisian with *trente mille francs de rente* can feel lonely, while there is an opera, a carnival, and a milliner's shop in existence !—

The baroness speedily set about improving her solitary hours. She devoted herself to the cultivation of her charms, as an Englishwoman might have done to the cultivation of her mind. Her accomplishments as a cosmetician were really surprising. She studied the art as a branch of natural history. Not a perfumer in Paris could have deceived her as to the ingredients of a wash, or chemical compounds of a pommade. She knew what acids would injure the enamel of her teeth, what astringents wither the smooth surface of her cheek, what spirituous infusions turn her sable locks to iron-grey or silver, as well as Berthollet or "Sromfridevé." She could tell what atmospheric changes enabled her to exchange blue ribbons for pink, without compromise of the becoming; and regulated by the phases of the moon her ebbs and flows between cap, hat, and turban.

Impossible to be more artistically arranged

than the apartment of the little coquette. Nothing, by the way, is so *easy* to render coquettish as an *entresol*, which is, in fact, a series of boudoirs. Saloons like those of the Hotel d'Osmond, or Hotel de Caraman, *must* be stately and ostentatious; the trickery of prettiness would be as much out of place in such places as rouge and pearl powder on the marble cheek of Michael Angelo's Moses. But a light airy *entresol*, or *mezzonine* story, whose windows, fronting the south, are shaded by Genoese awnings, overhanging balconies, filled with geraniums, heliotropes, and mignionette,—whose anteroom is painted blue, stripewise, to represent a tent, and whose dining-room is varnished, scagliola fashion,—whose drawing-room is of white and gold, the *fauteuils* and divans of yellow satin, the *cabarets* of pale Saxon blue porcelain, adorned with shepherds, shepherdesses, and garlands of carnations,—the *consoles* of varnished maple, white as snow, or as the single marble table, *taillé en bloc*, which sustains a scentless exotic in a vase of pale-green Sèvres,—whose boudoir is a tent of white muslin, drawn over dove-coloured *gros de Naples*,—whose bedroom is hung with cachemere spotted with palm-

leaves, leading to a bath-room altogether spotless, and lined with mirrors;—such an *entresol* is a paradise for a Peri (whose age is between twenty-five and fifty!) and such was the one inhabited in the Rue du Faubourg Montmartre by Madame la Baronne de Gimbecque!

The household was concomitant. A page in a neat livery, a powdered-headed middle-aged sobriety of a *maître d'hôtel*, a *chef* of sufficient merit for a lady neither a dinner-giver nor dinner-devotee; — and, to complete the measure, the *soubrette*, the waiting-maid, the spruce, cunning, Mademoiselle Aglaé, with her embroidered cambric aprons and pink ribbons; — one pennyworth of waiting-maid to all this monstrous quantity of malefaction!—The *maître d'hôtel* dusted the china, the page rubbed the floors, — everything but the lady's toilet being performed in France by slaves of the masculine gender. Monsieur Simon, the sober *maître d'hôtel*, and Lindor, the pert page, sometimes suggested to their mistress's mistress that an additional petticoat would be far more advantageous to the establishment than entertaining a workwoman fifteen days in the month for the care of

the household linen. But the *femme de chambre* would not hear of it. She chose to be the sole Helen in Troy; and, though devoid of personal views on either page or butler,—the cook in his white paper *casquette*, or the coachman in his flaxen wig,—resolved to admit no rival near the throne of her soubrettish autocracy. It was quite plague enough to have the house frequented by Eugène de Marsan, the handsome cousin-german of the ugly defunct ex-colonel of cuirassiers, Monsieur le Baron Nicodême de Gimbecque, and Claude de Bercy, the popular author of seventy-five successful vaudevilles; without encumbering the little *entresol* or its double entrance, double staircase, and corridor, appropriately named in Paris "of escape," with such lumber as a chambermaid.

"Has Madame Oudot sent home my *foulard peignoir?*" demanded Madame la Baronne of her waiting-maid, as she lay reclining in her marble bath, whose tepid warmth served to diffuse through the little room the aroma of the *eau de Ninon* which Mademoiselle Aglaé was sprinkling on the surface.

"Not yet; though I was particular in making

her promise it for yesterday, knowing that Madame expected a visit from Monsieur Eugène before she dressed to take her ride."

"Tiresome woman!" cried the lady in the bath,—an apostrophe which Aglaé of course applied to the unpunctual *couturière*. "Give me the new number of 'Le Bon Ton,' and in five minutes ring for my chocolate, and bring in my warm linen,—not sooner, or it will be cold before I am ready."

The waiting-maid obeyed; but finding on the marble slab in the corridor the 'Constitutionnel,' damp from the press, she held it for a moment over the drying-basket of the bath linen, and returned to her lady, taking the liberty, as she slowly paced the room, to cast an eye upon the news of the morning.

"*Sacristie! ce cher Monsieur Boncoeur!*—another audience of the king!"—exclaimed Mademoiselle Aglaé, presenting the paper to her lady, who extended to receive it a languid hand, humid with the perfumed exhalations of the bath.

"Doubtless about his title," she replied.

"*Title?*" inquired the waiting-maid, fearing she might be about to forfeit the envied distinc-

tion of belonging to the only household of quality in the hotel.

"Didn't I tell you that our neighbour overhead had purchased the estate of D'Offémont, and was trying to obtain the royal sanction to assume the name? Ay, exactly; the king, I perceive, has created him a baron; not D'Offémont, however, — he is to be Baron de Boncoeur. What people this government *does* ennoble!"—

"Monsieur Boncoeur has one of the greatest names in the monied world," remonstrated the waiting-woman: "he is mayor of his *arrondissement*, and *marguiller* of the parish."

"He may be beadle or drum-major, for anything I know or care," said Madame de Gimbecque with sublime contempt; "but I am convinced that in the time of the elder branch, he would never have shaken the dust from his feet in the palace of the Tuileries. Ha! — a critique on Claude's new play. Pray remind me, by and by, to send to Monsieur de Bercy the note-case wadded with *vitiver* I have been embroidering for him. *Voyons!* '*Sophie de Melcour*, a drama in three acts. We regret—a-hem!—feeble—diffuse — flat — a-hem! — dialogue full of platitudes —

characters full of exaggeration — style stilted — catastrophe contemptible — false taste — corrupt morality.' (This must have been written by some particular friend!) 'We cannot take our leave of Monsieur de Bercy without counselling him to turn his mind to some other branch of literary occupation than the stage, for which the bent of his genius evidently disqualifies this pains-taking but ill-judging young man.' Bah!—Eugène de Marsan's doing, I am convinced! He knows I dote upon theatrical entertainments. He knows that I bespoke half-a-dozen boxes to give *éclat* to Monsieur de Bercy's piece, and thinks to disgust me by this disparagement. Eugène does not know me; he does not appreciate the generosity of woman's nature! His abuse of poor Claude's play has put me more in conceit with it than ever. Certainly the style of *Sophie de Melcour is* rather stilted, and nobody can deny the exaggeration of the characters. *I* expected that the catastrophe would cause the damnation of the piece; and as to the dialogue, I could scarcely sit it out without a yawn. Aglaé!—on second thoughts, Monsieur de Marsan is going out of town, and has been plaguing me for the last six

months for some little trifle of my own work. I will give *him* the *vitiver* pocket-book: there will be plenty of time hereafter to get up another for Monsieur de Bercy. People so devoted to letters have no time to think of embroidered pocket-books. I dare say Bercy would like one bought at the Petit Dunquerque twice as well. There is no more sentiment in him than in one of his own farces."

Mademoiselle Aglaé was of the same opinion. The *Constitutionnel* having decided that Claude's seventy-sixth vaudeville was not to *run*, she decided that the author of the vaudeville was also at a stand-still. The loss of his *droits d'auteur*, which would probably deprive her of the gold chain and cross promised by her lady's love, determined *his* forfeiture of the embroidered note-case!

While the sacred mysteries of the toilet are proceeding in the bath-room, let us take a peep at the equivocal gentleman of the third floor; no longer arrayed in velvet or sparkling with solitaires, but engirt in a scanty, washed-out, printed calico dressing gown, torn in the button holes, and

short enough to display at the open wristbands the sleeves of a dirty checked shirt, covering a yellow shrivelled skin, apparently washed out, like the calico. A pair of flannel drawers, yellow as arnotto, covered his shrunk shanks; a pair of old shoes, cut down into agonizing slippers, his stockingless feet; while, enfranchised from the spruce, lustrous *toupet* adorning his brows when exposed to day's or gas-light's garish eye, his mean, narrow, Emperor-of-Austrian forehead recedes into a bare crown, whose denuded ugliness adds thirty years to the age of the full-dressed Adonis of the night before. Even his mouth—that critical verifyer of age—is strangely oldened; for his set of *Desirabodes* is still freshening in a glass of water on the chimney-piece, while the mumbling, toothless gums, fallen on each other, allow the lanky sallow cheeks to collapse, like the sides of a half-empty balloon.

Such was the unsophisticated man of the individual whose "getting-up" (as Claude de Bercy would have called it) for public representation was one of the miracles of the Palais Royal; a bazaar which, like the pedlar from the fair

Lavinian shore, hath "complexions in its pack," and youth and beauty per yard, per ell, or per ounce, exposed in all its plate-glass windows.

It was, as we have already stated, usually half-past seven of an evening when the full-dressed effort of art started forth along the Boulevards; it was as invariably three o'clock in the morning, minus a quarter, when it returned again, to lay aside its adornments, and subside into the lean and slippered pantaloon. Ma'mselle Berthe had been three hours snoring when, with a patent key, he nightly let himself in, to deposit his *Desirabodes*, false fronts, whiskers, and calves on his dressing-table; and in the secretaire beside it, realities of a more solid nature: bags of silver pieces, rouleaux of golden ones, and now and then a flimsy I O U from some English flat, or an I O U addressed by the Bank of England to millions of English flats, which he rarely ensnugged within the secret-paper-drawer of his *bonheur du jour*, without pronouncing a benediction over its senseless form, varying in intensity of expression, indeed, according as the document happened to be accompanied by bags of silver or rouleaux of gold.

When wholly *un*accompanied,—sole trophy of his midnight gains,—the fiendish expression of the little mummy's puckered visage deepened into downright demonism !—

Meanwhile, it was the morning duty of the sour *femme de confiance* to summon the shattered remains of humanity, which she called master, to breakfast. But let it not be inferred from the nature of his personal costume that the board of Monsieur Georges was spread penuriously. His outward man regarded the gratification of others; his inward regarded his own. The colour of his dressing-gown tended not a jot to his selfish enjoyment; but the amber coffee and smoking cream, the spongy bread and *présalé* butter, the slices of hard *saucisson d'Arles* and tender *côtelettes à la minute* in their silver *réchaud*, regarded exclusively his own five senses. It was to insure to his daily use these sweeteners of human existence, that the *chevalier d'industrie* toiled in his loathsome calling from eight o'clock to two per night; it was to ensure them hot and hot, and upon the most moderate terms, that he bore with the angular and acid female who presided over his domestic arrangements the remaining eighteen hours of the twenty-

four. A younger and fairer *femme de ménage* would have exacted a nicer toilet, and the daintiest half of the dainties wherewith it was her duty to provide his table. But the *chipie* not only calculated the weight of provisions to be consumed to the thirty-second fraction of an ounce, but was content to eat the drumsticks of the chickens, the wings of the woodcocks, as well as to support the unsightly spectacle of his bald head and nauseous costume.

"Of what were you disputing last night with the old witch, Madame Grégoire, when I passed the porter's lodge?" demanded Monsieur Georges of the perpendicular shrew seated opposite to him, as he swallowed to his own share the twentieth of the two dozen oysters of Murênes provided for their breakfast.

"I only stepped in to pay her the twenty francs for Guguste's monthly board."

"But what was there in *that* to beget a squabble?" demanded the toothless man, in the mumbling chuckle which nothing but long custom enabled his housekeeper to understand. "Had she a complaint to make against the lad?"

"No one has complaints to make of him but

you," said Ma'mselle Berthe, forgetting her own venomous impeachment concerning the coffee and cream. "We disputed because Madame Grégoire, like an ill-conditioned woman as she is, presumed to insult me."

"And what then?—you can make her *étrennes* pay for it."

"*You* can. But what compensation will it be to *me* that you diminish her New-year's gift from twenty francs to ten?—She had the impudence to ask me to have an eye to the people on the third-floor! As if I was paid to do the spy-work of the *propriétaire!*"

"And who *are* the people on the third-floor?" —demanded Monsieur Georges, who knew and cared very little for the proceedings of any house save the one under government licence in the Rue de Richelieu, amid the blaze of whose Carcel lamps, and glare of whose gilded cornices, he had the honour nightly to assist in fleecing the disloyal subjects of Louis Philippe and the green-horn foreign visitors to his realms.

"How should I know?"

"Because Madame Grégoire, doubtless, informed you."

"She told me it was a lady and her daughter, about whom she had her doubts."

"*What* doubts?—that they were disreputable people?"

"Bah!—that they were *beggars!*"

"Then why don't the landlord get rid of them?"

"How can he?—they pay their rent."

"Then what did she want you to find out?"

"How the young lady employs herself of a morning, and why the mamma did not choose to receive the visits of that excellent man Monsieur le Baron de Boncoeur."

"Is the first-floor made a baron?"

"To be sure he is!—everybody is made something now-a-days. If you had the spirit of a mouse, you would call yourself the Chevalier de Georges."

"I *have* the spirit of a mouse, which is to 'ware trap!" chuckled the dilapidated croupier. "I had a little adventure one season at Bagnères de Bigorre, under the name of the Chevalier St Georges, which the police may not happen to have forgotten. But to return to the banker: what can

he have in view by visiting a couple of beggarly women on a third-floor above the *entresol?*"

"You are as bad as Ma'me Grégoire! That is just what she inquired of *me.*"

"But though you mightn't choose to acquaint *her* with what had come to your knowledge—Hark! a ring at the bell"—cried Monsieur Georges, interrupting himself as he shuffled out of his seat, and prepared to retreat into his adjoining chamber. "If 'tis any one for me, say I'm gone out, and shan't be at home till evening."

"Don't flurry yourself," replied the housekeeper, moving towards the ante-room; "'tis only Guguste, come up to varnish your boots and bring your *toupet* from the barber's. Don't you hear him scratching the panel?—That is the signal by which I know his ring from any other person's."

And no sooner had she charily opened the door, and prepared to lock it again after admitting him, than the quick-witted *gamin*, in his fustian blouse, and barret-cap, though thread-bare set jauntily on one side, insinuated himself into the apartment.

"What makes you so late, sirrah!"—demanded the mummy in the washed-out calico dressing-gown, grudging the foundling even the savoury steam of the viands that still circled in the eating-room.

"'Tis only half-after eleven, sir," replied the drudge. "You desired there might be no noise in the apartment till half-after eleven."

"'Tis three minutes after the half-hour."

"Mademoiselle does not choose me to come in till breakfast is cleared away, and the things ready to be washed up," said Guguste, not caring to hear.

"In that case, you have no right to be here now. But you know my orders, that you are to enter this room with my dressing things every day at half-past eleven. Where have you been idling for the last three minutes?"

"I have not been idling."

"Where have you been working then?"

"Helping to put up a truckle-bed in Madame Grégoire's back-room. Her son Jules returned at five o'clock this morning from India."

"From India, child?" demanded the gouvernante, peeling the only slice of saucisson left in

the dish, and insinuating it between lips as thin as itself.

"From Algiers in the Indies. Monsieur Jules serves in the twenty-third regiment of the line, and, having suffered considerably from the climate, has obtained his furlough."

"Another lazy useless hanger-on in the house! —God help us!" ejaculated the housekeeper. "There! go and arrange your master's things in his dressing-room, while I put away breakfast. I will leave the china for you to wash up outside the door. Go!"

And he went,—neither whistling, however, nor with any want of thought. Between his discoveries concerning the Courson family, and the wonderful events he had just heard recited in the metaphorical military prose of Monsieur Jules, *alias* the slang of the twenty-third regiment of the line, Guguste had a forty-horse power of cogitation at that moment labouring in his brain!—

SKETCH III.

Why should our themes be all aristocratic?
Rise, honest muse, and sing of the back attic.
POPE (*Variorum edit.*)

NOTHING can be more distinctive of the difference of morals and manners between England and the Continent, than the discrepancy between an English garret and a foreign *mansarde*. Alike elevated in their views, alike "commercing with the skies,"—the English garret is sacred to the priestesses of domestic drudgery, housemaids, cookmaids, lady's maids, empty trunks, broken band-boxes, decayed furniture, young master's old rocking-horse turned out to grass, a smoke-dried patent churn, a bird-organ wanting a handle, and other lumber; which, having served the caprice of the hour, would be thrown or given away but for that

avaricious tenacity of human egotism which decrees that "oysters would be good eating, if the shells could be warmed up for the servants' hall."

Still, in a London garret floor, there predominates a homely character of order and decency. It riseth with the lark, it roosteth with other household birds; its curfew is rung somewhere about ten of the clock, and it closeth its task for the day with the brief devotion of a paternoster.

Far different the *mansarde*. Though so much nearer heaven that it occupies the seventh or eighth, rather than the fifth floor of the house, its morality is of a more dubious description. Unencumbered by lumber, living or dead, (for every story is bound to give shelter to its own menials and empty trunks,) it is swept and garnished almost as decently as the rest of the mansion. But, being let in single chambers to single men and women, the respectability attendant upon double-bodied individuality is unhappily wanting. I do remember me of having located in one of the first hostels in Vienna, whereof the ground-floor was occupied by coffee-rooms, and a ball-room for the masquerades of the carnival; the second was the habitation of no less a personage than Don

Miguel; the third, the counting-house of Baron Rothschild; the fourth, a heterogeneous domicile of tailors, mantua-makers, Jew-brokers, and picture-dealers; while the fifth was a notorious den of thieves! This villanous propinquity between "honourable men," such as your Rothschilds and Don Miguels, and a gang of robbers and brokers, could never have existed in scientific England, which distinguishes its human classes as accurately as Linnæus his vegetable tribes.

Now the attic story, or *mansarde*, of the mansion of the Boulevard Montmartre, had (as might be inferred from the frequent orations of Madame Grégoire, the porteress, in honour of the "particularity" of the landlord) little to boast in the way of exclusiveness. Divided into two sections, as is usual in such altitudes, by a long narrow passage, redeemed from utter darkness by small single panes of glass inserted at rare intervals into the roof, each having a dark green bull's eye in the centre, the better to exclude the light; the flooring consisted of sexagonal tiles, originally reddened and polished, but now jaundiced to a yellow tinge, and loose in their sockets, as the patent mineral masticators of Mademoiselle Berthe.

Along this corridor, was ranged a succession of dirty and crazy-looking doors, bearing numerals from No. 47 to No. 62, and, consequently, giving access to fifteen lodgers of either sex. By the side of one or two, were suspended hare's-foot bell-pulls; beside others, handleless and scarcely handleable woollen cords. Some boasted only a packthread, others a bare wire, others nothing.

For even the *mansarde* pretends to degrees and distinctions among its "thrones, potentates, dominions, princedoms, powers;" and the front attic, looking, or rather peeping, down upon the Boulevards, inhabited by Mademoiselle Toinette, *ouvrière modiste, établie pour son compte et dans ses meubles*, regarded with becoming disdain No. 61, a dark closet, borrowed out of the sloping of the roof, and appropriated to the truckle-bed of poor Guguste, the foot-boy. Between this major and minimus of the *étage* were three rooms, "small by degrees, and beautifully less;" the first a condemned blue chamber adjoining the milliner's, understood in the house to be paid for by Monsieur Boncœur, the deputy, as a lumber room for the unsightlinesses of his establishment, but which no human being was ever seen to approach during

the day, though footsteps were occasionally heard there during the night; the second, a room of especial order and trimness, inhabited by Madame Dondin, an ex-box-opener of the Ambigu Comique, having a pension from the theatre of one hundred and fifty francs, or six pounds per annum; and thirdly, the less trimly, but far more ornate *pied-à-terre* of Mademoiselle Isoline, the deputy-double of the general utility *jeune première* of the minor theatre called the Funambules. The rest of the rooms were occupied by clerks belonging to shops or counting-houses in the commercial quarter of the Bourse; a young law-student, who, despising the tone and atmosphere of the Pays Latin, chose to trudge three miles per morning to the endurance of his professional duties; a decayed old gentleman, whose family having risen in the world, had pensioned him off, and compelled *him* to rise to a den in an attic story; and a young *merveilleux* of the Boulevards, whose daily means enabled him to indulge in a cup of *bouillon Hollandais* for breakfast, an ice and wafer at Tortoni's for dinner, tenpennyworth of fashion and fine-arts at Musard's concerts, a coat and waistcoat from Blin, and an astounding

pair of whiskers. Such was the population of the place; and the elements of this chaos, forty feet square, duly considered, the decency and decorum of its legislation were truly wonderful. No noise, no riot, no confusion, no smashing of windows, or calling of names, as when in England such jarring atoms of humanity meet and ferment together. The familiarities of the upper region proceeded no father than salutations of "*Bon jour, mon voisin!*" "*Bon jour, ma charmante voisine!*" "*ça va bien?*" "*Quel chien de temps!*" "*A revoir!*"

Between No. 49, the residence of the *ex-ouvreuse*, and No. 61, the habitation of the actress, a sort of professional acquaintanceship, however, was kept up, in a *jargon de coulisses* almost incomprehensible to people belonging to the world of actualities. One evening, shortly after the commencement of acquaintance between the first and third floors, Madame Dondin was seated beside the slenderly-supplied hearth of Mademoiselle Isoline, having considerately brought with her the classical old *chauffrette* of iron in its walnut-wood case, which, in her palmy days of box-opening, was nightly installed under her carpet shoes during the

intervals of her busy vocation. On the table between them, stood two of those diminutive glasses purporting to contain potables which, being more pernicious than wine, are allowed to poison mankind in minuter proportions; at the bottom of which was a highly aromatic sediment, the lees of cognac, curaçoa, absinthe, opium, or some other patent medicine administering to ailments of the human mind or body. Beside Madame Dondin lay her horn spectacles, and a crumpled copy of the *Entr'acte*, or universal gazette of playbills for the preceding night; beside Mademoiselle Isoline, the copy of her part in the melodrama of 'Inez de Castro,' of which a general rehearsal was to take place at the Funambules the following evening. But, as is ever the case where females sit down to study in couples, the labours of the brain were grievously interrupted by those of the tongue.

"Of course, my dear child," observed the old lady to one who might have been called young, had her five-and-twenty years have passed in any less corrupt atmosphere or calling than the helotism of a sixth-rate theatre,—"of course, *mon*

enfant, nothing can be more praiseworthy than your determination to be seen no more at the balls of *La Chaumière*. Only I must permit myself to observe, that if these sage projects happen to originate in the hope of fixing the affections of Monsieur Eric, *ce gros tragédien qui ne deviendra jamais grand*, who (*par paranthèse*) was famously hissed the other night at the Belleville theatre, in the part of Sylla, I fairly warn you that your pains are pleasures, as well as labour, lost."

"Monsieur Eric, Monsieur Eric! Will your brains never run on any other topic than Monsieur Eric?" cried Mademoiselle Isoline, pushing from her the dog's-eared theatrical manuscript, indited upon paper the colour and consistency of the *cornets* which conveyed from the tobacconist to the hand of her venerable neighbour her weekly Macouba. "Ever since the day that *le gros tragédien* bribed you with a pound of *chocolat aux pistaches* to convey to me one of his stupid *billets-doux* (for the wretch writes in prose!) you have chosen to surmise that my feelings are influenced by a creature for whom it would be charitable in the administration to provide a set of caoutchouc

lungs, whenever he has to get through a five-octave, five-act, heroic part of Victor Hugo, or Alexandre Dumas."

"I had rather surmise as much, *mon enfant*, than fancy you were throwing away your affections on a tailor's layman, such as Monsieur le Chevalier Hector de Gobemouche, the lodger at 48, who hangs his cambric frills to dry out of the window adjoining mine, — an indecorum which nearly cost me a brood of favourite canaries last season."

"Monsieur le Chevalier will never attract any other attention than his own in the looking-glass!" interrupted Mademoiselle Isoline in a tone of contempt.

"It can be no other, then, than Monsieur Eugene, the medical student, who sent you the fine *bouquet* of camellias and mimosa the night of your benefit?" cried Madame Dondin, allowing no opportunity to the young deputy-double to defend herself. "What a falling-off from the time when I had first the pleasure of seeing you perform one of the Zephyrs in the *Fête de Flore* in a sky-blue petticoat edged with silver, in which, dangling from a cord, with blue lights charmingly thrown

on you from below, you looked like something truly angelic!—You were rich then!"—

"Would to heaven I were so now!" cried the young actress, with a look of despair which rendered the defeatures of her haggard countenance only more painfully apparent. "For, *entre nous*, Madame Dondin, I have not a five-franc piece before me; and, so far from rising in public estimation to warrant hopes of an increase of salary, I was all but hissed last week in my favourite part of Pacquita; and henceforward *au physique tant qu'au moral*, I am no longer worth a sol!"—

"You must have been a sad wasteful prodigal, then, in your time!"—replied Madame Dondin, taking a pinch of snuff with a highly-reprehensive air, and contracting her already narrow brows.

"I don't say no," replied Isoline. "It has ever been my maxim to take with one hand, and give with the other."

"*Squander* with the other, you mean!" persisted the old woman maliciously.

"Not altogether. I can scarce call the money *squandered* which for five years went to pay a hundred francs a month for my old father's board

in the Hospice de St Medard down at my *pays* yonder in Burgundy. I can scarce call the money *squandered* which saved my poor cousin and playmate, Jacques, when he had the luck of a black number for the conscription. Neither do I call money *squandered* which went to redeem my poor aunt's furniture when——"

"Why, what have you to *show* for it all?" demanded the phlegmatic Madame Dondin. "Tell me that?"

"I have something to *feel;* something that keeps me from freezing these long winter nights, when I have only a couple of *couvertures*, and the embers of the morning's log to keep out the frost," replied Isoline, cheerfully.

"But what business have you to have fallen so low in the world as to two blankets and a log? And what can exceed the wastefulness of pinning that splendid cachmere shawl up to the window by way of curtain? I warrant me it did not cost less than three thousand francs?"

"I hung it up only when you talked of spending the evening with me," replied Isoline, good-humouredly; "for one of the panes has a hole in it. It was out of regard for your rheumatism,

Madame Dondin, that I pinned up my poor shawl."

"A couple of yards of serge would have served the purpose as well."

"I don't happen to *have* a couple of yards of serge," replied Isoline, carelessly.

"If you choose to disencumber yourself of the shawl (I know a rich banker's lady in the Rue de Provence who is always looking out for *cachemires d'occasion*, which she passes off as new to her fashionable friends), you might furnish yourself with creditable mohair curtains, and the odd blanket you seem in want of; besides putting three or four hundred francs into your purse as a nest-egg."

"I don't choose to part with the shawl," said Isoline coldly: "'twas given me by a friend."

"You are not going to play sentiment, I trust, *ma belle?*" said the old *ouvreuse* with a hideous sneer. "Keep *that*, *ma pauvre Isoline*, for the Funambules!"

"I shall,—I do! and my shawl for a comfort to my old shoulders ten years hence."

"I see how it is! You will come to die in an hospital!" exclaimed Madame Dondin, shrugging

her shoulders. "However, my dear child, I shall always feel comforted by the reflection that you were not lost for want of good advice. And now, good night! for you have your part to study, and my eyes are drawing straws already."

"Won't you hear me repeat it before you go, Madame Dondin?" cried Mademoiselle Isoline, snatching up the dog's-eared manuscript.

"Not to-night, *ma belle*, not to-night!" replied the *ouvreuse*, who had a plan for finishing the evening with Mademoiselle Berthe.

And having obtained leave to fill her *chauffrette* with the few remaining embers of her poor hostess, away she hobbled, leaving Isoline to her studies and her meditations.

The hearth soon waxed cold; and a December wind, whistling over the roofs of the houses, blew through the aperture in the window, sharp and straight as a discharge from one of Perkins's steam guns. The young actress at length dragged down the much-discussed cachmere, and flung it over her head and shoulders, as the best mode of self-preservation from the intemperance of the season. She cast a wistful glance around the *mansarde*, on the dirty and distempered walls of

which flickered the uncertain light of a *bougie de l'étoile* stuck in an empty bottle. Perched on a gilt ball of the cracked glass of her toilet was the silver *toque* and feathers sent by her dresser for approbation, from the theatre, preparatory to the rehearsal of the following night; and on the dirty marble slab below, lay scattered a glittering chain and buckle of crysocal or mosaic gold, a pair of paste earrings entangled in a bunch of false ringlets, a rouge-pot in a pasteboard box wanting a cover, a stick of pomatum, a pair of flesh-coloured gauze stockings, four two-sous pieces, and a *bonbonnière* filled with stale *pâte de guimauve.*

On the wall hung, on one side the room, a highly-coloured print of Taglioni in the Sylphide, the Scottish farmer kneeling at her aërial feet, having a bird of Paradise feather stuck knowingly in his bonnet; on the other, a row of pegs, whence depended sundry dirty peignoirs, a mock boa, and a splendid satin dress of the newest fashion. There was nothing encouraging in the survey! Still less, when, on crossing the room to ascertain whether there were a crust left of her breakfast in the *buffet* to serve for a frugal supper, Isoline discovered nothing within that unsavoury cup-

board but a few chipped plates of *terre de pipe*, a dirty mustard-pot, and a half-empty salt-cellar.

On returning to her seat from this fruitless voyage of discovery, the disappointed actress caught a glimpse of her own rueful countenance in the cracked toilet-glass, and laughed outright at its dolorous expression. But after a second glance at the careworn face, to which a complexion, seared by the high habitual painting of the stage, black-dyed eyebrows, hollow cheeks, and, above all, a pair of deep-set eyes, to which habits of dissipation had imparted that indescribable expression which touches the brink of all we hate, Isoline felt almost horror-stricken. The poor, cold, hungry creature, read there the announcement that, miserable as were her fortunes, there was a lower grade to which she was inevitably falling. Her youth was deserting her!—and to what had that youth been devoted!

Something almost amounting to a tear arose in her eyes. But it was not in Isoline's nature to be sad. Throwing herself back in her straw chair, she cast aside her cares for a time, by resolutely taking up the part in which she was to be perfect by the morrow; and after the lapse of a few

minutes, was humming the air of a gay *vaudeville.* For more than an hour afterwards did she stultify her understanding by pondering over the incoherent phrases of a farrago of what is called fine writing; till at length, benumbed by cold and weariness, she was on the point of falling asleep.

"If I were to try another *petit verre?*" mused Isoline, starting up and glancing towards the bottle that stood on the *buffet;* "I think there must be one glass left. But no! 'tis a detestable habit in a woman, and a thing he hates and despises!" And rubbing her chilly hands together to restore circulation, she betook herself once more courageously to her studies. At length the candle seemed to dance before her heavy eyes, the book fell from her hands, and the poor shivering actress dropped asleep.

It was impossible to guess what space of time had elapsed when Mademoiselle Isoline, roused by a noise in the corridor, started up to find herself almost frozen with cold, with the candle burning low in the bottle.

"I may as well sleep in bed as *here,*" was her reflection; and forthwith she began to prepare herself for her hard pillow.

The stained and rumpled silk gown was soon unhooked at the waist, and appended to its peg; when, just as Isoline was on the point of tying upon her head the Madras handkerchief which served for nightcap, it occurred to her that she had not yet tried on the silver *toque* in which she was to figure the following night as Inez de Castro; and having hastily assumed the ringlets and ear-rings indispensable to give effect to the *coiffure*, the plumes of which already nodded over her brow, she was so dissatisfied with her haggard and wretched aspect, as to seize the hare's-foot, and restore by a patch of rouge the false brilliancy wanting to complete the toilet of an actress.—When lo! just as the professional daub had been administered to her icy cheek, a hasty tap at the door claimed her attention, and a low, gentle female voice was heard, entreating admittance. Regardless of her bare shoulders and glittering *toque*, Isoline instantly hastened to the door, on unclosing which she discovered, by the light of the candle in her hand, the slight figure and pallid face of Mademoiselle de Courson leaning against the wall. Instinctively the child of perdition felt

herself to be in the presence of one of the children of light; and, snatching off the gaudy headdress, she retreated into the room to cover herself with the memorable shawl, ere she proceeded to inquire "what there was for the service of mademoiselle?"

"*Pardon, pardon!* I fancy I have made a mistake," cried Claire, retreating in her turn, in utter consternation; "I fancied this was Mademoiselle Toinette's apartment. I came to beg a little *braise* to light my fire."

"Mademoiselle had better knock at the door of Madame Dondin," said Isoline humbly. "Mademoiselle Toinette is seldom at home at this hour."

"Alas! I have already applied to her," faltered Mademoiselle de Courson; "but she would not even open the door, and bade me get about my business!—It is such a dreadful night, and mamma is very ill!—I almost fear, God help me! that she is dying!"—

"*Dying!* Step in a moment!" cried Isoline, who had often noticed with respect, on the stairs, the interesting countenances of Claire and her

mother. "Perhaps, with a little patience, we may be able to rekindle a few embers on my hearth."

And in a moment she was down on her knees, puffing away, with the utmost aid of a miserable pair of bellows, till a few kindly sparks among the ashes began to glow and redden.

"It was very wrong of the *garde* to let a sick person's fire go out on such a night as this!" said the actress, as she proceeded eagerly with her task.

"My poor mother has no nurse but myself," faltered Mademoiselle de Courson. "She had fallen asleep with my hand in hers, and I dared not disturb her to attend to the fire. I tremble to leave her alone for even the few minutes necessary to come up hither."

"No *nurse?*" cried Isoline. "At *your* age venture to be alone with an invalid in danger of her life. Is not this very rash?"

"It is inevitable," replied Clare, moved by the kindness of the actress, yet unable to divest herself of the repugnance with which she had been inspired by her mother, on some occasion, when the flaunting attire of Mademoiselle Isoline had

attracted in the entry the attention of Madame de Courson.

"But consider, my dear young lady, what your situation would be should anything actually occur to madame? You might be unable to summon assistance!"

"I know it!" faltered Claire, shuddering, partly with cold, partly with terror, and scarcely able to repress her tears. "But we have not the means of hiring proper attendance."

"If it would not be taking a liberty," said Isoline, in spite of her professional hardihood, almost intimidated by the aspect of this holy grief,—"I should be happy to sit up with you for the remainder of the night?"

"Would you indeed? It would be an act of signal mercy! Yet what right have I to accept such a service from a stranger,—destitute as I am of the smallest power of marking my gratitude!" cried Claire, correcting her first eager acceptance.

"Say not a word of gratitude. Mutual service is a debt we poor creatures of clay owe each other in a world of trouble!" cried Isoline. "I am not unhandy in a sick chamber; and since you will

allow me to assist you, return at once to the invalid, and I will follow you instantly with the shovel-full of embers."

With repeated thanks, Mademoiselle de Courson accepted the offers and advice of her new acquaintance; and the moment she had quitted the room Isoline hastened to "wash the filthy witness from her face;" and having assumed the most decent of her caps and *peignoirs*, and enveloped herself anew in her shawl, hurried down stairs, on charitable thoughts intent.

From the length of time that elapsed ere the door was opened, after she had rung the bell, the actress was half inclined to fear that the poor young lady repented having accepted the offers of such a neighbour; but when at length admittance was granted, the agitated manner in which Claire announced that she had found her mother in a fainting state, satisfied her that the delay was unintentional. Advancing hastily to the bed, the only article of furniture in the denuded chamber into which she was introduced, the good Samaritan proceeded to feel the hands of the sufferer, and found them cold as death.

"What have you done for her?—what medicines

has she taken?—what are you about to give her?—cried Isoline, alarmed in her turn.

"Nothing! alas, alas! she can no longer swallow!" cried Mademoiselle Courson, wringing her hands; and in a moment, Isoline snatched the light from the table, and beheld upon the countenance of the poor sufferer those lilac streaks and rising dews which appear to be the precursors of death. Still, the actress had seen instances where similar appearances were produced solely by the faintness arising from exhaustion.

"Give me the eau-de-Cologne!" cried she.

"I have none!" replied Mademoiselle de Courson.

"Eau-de-vie, then."

"Alas! there is nothing of the kind at hand."

"*Dieu de dieu!* what restoratives, then, have you been using?"

"This *flacon* of salts! I can have no further disguises with you! We have exhausted everything! We are destitute of even the necessaries of life!"

"Blow up a little fire as well as you can with those embers, and put on some water; I will be back in a moment!" cried Isoline, on hearing this

alarming announcement. And long before her companion had succeeded in raising the requisite flame, the actress returned, bringing with her the fortunately spared bottle of cognac. A few drops administered in a tea-spoon to the motionless invalid, and at intervals renewed, at length caused a heavy sigh to burst from her lips, and as her eyes unclosed for a moment, she faltered with yearning tenderness the name of her daughter. A stone *cruchon*, filled with boiling water, was next placed at her feet; and by the time Madame de Courson was able to express herself in intelligible words, Isoline was ready with a cup of steaming bread panada, the only aliment the bare cupboards of either of the little necessitous households could at that moment supply. For the actress had guessed rightly;—the poor lady was sinking only for want of food.

"Don't mention my name, let Madame take me for a hired nurse," whispered Isoline, conjecturing that her respectable neighbour might entertain scruples at finding her daughter in such companionship; and Claire, without understanding her object, silently pressed her hand in token of assent. "A kind neighbour, dearest mother, is come to

assist me in nursing you," was all the explanation necessary to be given to Madame de Courson.

"She is very good. Don't let her fatigue herself," murmured the sufferer; and at once revived and overcome by the food and stimulants she had imbibed, she reclosed her eyes and sank into a tranquil sleep very different from her previous insensibility.

"Rely upon it, she will now rest comfortably," said Isoline, drawing the curtain.

"I scarcely hope it!" replied the young girl mournfully. "This is the fifth night I have sat up with mamma, and she never sleeps more than ten minutes at a time. Her nerves are miserably shaken. She starts up, fancying people are in the room, come to take her to prison."

"Have you no physician?" inquired the actress.

"We *had* one; but finding that he was not regularly paid, he ceased to visit us," replied Claire. "You, whose charity has caused you to be introduced here, so as to view the nakedness of the land, must perceive at once the condition to which we are reduced. Since mamma's illness, I have been unable to take in work. All our property is gone; and unless I should receive a

favourable answer to an application I made yesterday, Madame Grégoire has given us warning to quit, and my dearest mother can only be removed to a public hospital. We have seen better days. My mother is—but no matter! She must die! I feel—I feel that she must die in an hospital!"

All this was uttered without tears; but broken by sobbing sighs, such as burst from the bosom of a child after a severe fit of weeping. A tear meanwhile fell from the hollow eye of the actress, but it fell in silence.

"How much do you owe to the proprietor?" she inquired without apology of Mademoiselle de Courson.

"Nearly seventy francs, besides five to the portress!"

"Be comforted, then," cried the actress. "If this be the worst of the case, I shall myself be able to assist you; and to-morrow there shall be no further want of food, fuel, or advice. No thanks, *ma chère demoiselle*! It is something that you deign to accept the assistance of such a one as I! And now lay yourself quietly down at the foot of your your mother's bed, and take some rest; *I* shall be

on the *qui vive;* and if she calls, will be sure to wake you to attend upon her."

Claire suffered herself to be persuaded, for, in truth, the poor girl was scarcely able to stand. She rested her aching head beside her mother's feet; and the light of a grey winter sunrise was gleaming into the room, when again she opened her eyes to the sorrows of life.

"The good lady has stirred but once, and after taking some warm *tisane* from my hand, mistaking it for yours, soon dropped off to sleep again," said Isoline, replying to her companion's looks of terrified inquiry. And on examining the room, Mademoiselle de Courson found with surprise and gratitude, that her new friend had swept up the hearth, set on the *bouilloire*, filled the pitchers with filtered water from the fountain on the *palier*, and tidied up the place. The cups were rinsed, the curtains neatly arranged; everything was in order.

"And now I must leave you, for I have urgent business on hand," said Isoline, good-humouredly. "But in an hour or two I shall be here, till when, *ma bonne demoiselle*, keep up your spirits."

It was that very morning, of all the days in the year, that Monsieur le Chevalier Hector de Gobemouche, as he was seething in his chocolate-pot an unctuous compound of honey, olive-oil, and *pommade de concombres*, intended to restore whiteness and smoothness to his hands, at a more convenient cost than the emollients furnished for such purposes by Messieurs Lubin and Co., overheard through the thin wainscot of his room the following discourse between his neighbour, Madame Dondin, and a voice which he did not immediately recognise.

"An't you ashamed of yourself, for having denied your door last night to a poor fellow-creature in distress?" said the nameless speaker.

"*Ma foi!* if one were to open one's doors to all one's fellow-creatures in distress," replied the *ex-ouvreuse*, "one must lodge in the Parvis Notre Dame!"

"There came but *one* poor soul, and you refused her. But no matter! I come to ask you a service. You offered to dispose of my shawl for me."

"I can't be troubled this morning; I have my

pot-au-feu to mind," said Madame Dondin, doggedly.

"But if I promise to watch the soup while you are gone? I would go myself, only I have still this plaguy part of Inez to hammer into my head; and I could sit by your hearth and con it over."

"Yes; and suffer the broth to spoil for want of skimming!"

"Perhaps you fancy that I think of giving you this trouble for nothing?" remonstrated Isoline. "But pray understand that there will be a crown of *bonne main* for you, if you make a good bargain."

"A crown, indeed! I used to make as much when I was a box-opener by every fainting-fit, and nothing furnished for the money but a few civil words and a glass of spring water!"

"Make your fee a five franc piece, then, and get you gone, or I will go myself!" cried the indignant Isoline. Whereupon Madame Dondin, by no means wishing to lose the job, exclaimed,—"Well, well, fold up your shawl neatly in paper; or stay,—best pass a hot iron over it, to take out

the creases and make it look like new; and if I don't bring you back fifty crowns within an hour, my name is not Agrippina Dondin!"

"You must bring me back a hundred or nothing," said Isoline firmly. "If I can't get that much for it, I will take it at once to our manager's wife, who has often offered to purchase it of me for thirty Napoleons."

"I'll do my best, I can but do my best!" cried Agrippina, shuffling on her old merino cloak.

"Remember! *three* hundred francs or nothing!" cried Isoline, as her ambassadress quitted the room. And, on finding herself alone, she drew forth once more from the pocket of her *foulard* apron, the copy of her luckless part of 'Inez de Castro;' and, sitting down beside the fire, with the ladle across her knee, and her eyes occasionally directed towards the earthen jar in which simmered the pottage of Agrippina, began to recite aloud with becoming emphasis,—"*O toi! objet de tant de vœux! Toi! dont la tendresse embaume encore le cœur anéanti de la plus malheureuse des femmes! Reçois encore,—reçois encore,—reçois!* — Now what on earth will become of me!" exclaimed

poor Isoline, interrupting herself.—"The more I strive to drive this tiresome stuff into my brains, the more my thoughts wander to that unhappy daughter and mother on the third floor!—What *will* become of the new piece?—what will become of us *all*!"

SKETCH IV.

A PARISIAN *soubrette*, or waiting-woman, is usually an exaggerated edition of the lady she serves. Once installed in an advantageous place, she is apt to remain a fixture for years, taking annual toll or tithe of her mistress's tradespeople, and adopting, with her cast-off caps and ribbons, the tone and opinions of her superior.

The abigail of a *dévote* is usually double-dyed in bigotry. In a cold winter's afternoon you are sure to find *monsieur le curé* warming his nose over her fire, and his heart over a goblet of her spiced wine. The abigail of a coquette is equally devoted to the fopperies of the world;—nay, as these people are certain to advance a step *beyond* their ladies, just as, in refurbishing, they raise the bows and enlarge the borders of the cast-off caps,

the *soubrette* of a *femme légère*, such as Madame la Baronne de Gimbecque, is seldom irreproachable.—

Nevertheless, the reputation of Mademoiselle Aglaé was in excellent repair. She was as careful over its conservation as over that of her lady's point-lace; and if a curious eye presumed to detect a darn or fissure in either, "it was but a pin-hole; the article was not an atom the worse for wear."—It was surprising with what majesty of virtue Mademoiselle Aglaé swept past poor little Claire de Courson; or if she chanced to encounter the deputy-double-general-utility *jeune première* of the back attic, raised her chin to just such an angle of elevation as might have enabled her to shoot peas down her neighbour's kitchen chimney. There was a marry-come-up air about the *soubrette* of the *entresol*, which Madame Grégoire, Guguste, and others, decided to be decidedly *mauvais ton*, and beneath the dignity of an aristocratic household.

For Guguste, who had access of toleration to all the nooks and corners of the house, was already deep in the secrets of Mademoiselle Aglaé; had been the bearer of her *billets-doux*, and sharer of

her untimely exits and entrances; had called hackney-coaches and dismissed duns at her bidding: and it was perhaps owing to the *gamin's* warnings and instructions that Monsieur Jules, of the twenty-third regiment of the line, who, eschewing idleness, had undertaken the duties of *frotteur* to the hotel during his residence with the porteress his mother, displayed such provoking insensibility to the delicate attentions of the *soubrette.*

"I became old Baptiste's substitute, you see, to save the poor fellow having a deputy to pay during his sojourn at the hospital," said Jules to the *gamin,* one confidential morning, in the dark recesses of the porter's lodge. "But, *sacre bleu!* when I undertook the office gratis, there was no especial clause concerning the *petits verres* and *biscuits de Rheims* I was to receive every morning from Ma'mselle Aglaé."

"Take my advice, Monsieur Jules," whispered Guguste, in reply, "and don't take *petits verres* before breakfast; least of all from Ma'mselle Aglaé, who, if they were missed from the liqueur-case by Monsieur Simon, the *maître d'hôtel,* is

as likely as not to accuse you of helping yourself."

"Guguste!" said the young soldier, in a severe tone, twisting his mustachios with an air of magnanimity—"*pas d'ça!* — Ever respect the sex! Beware of allowing yourself to slander unnecessarily the fairer moiety of the creation. Such is the rule of his Majesty's twenty-third regiment of the line!"

"Ay, ay, I see how it is! the woman tempts you, and you do drink!" quoth Guguste, with a knowing smile. "But just let Monsieur Simon catch you, and one step will take you before the *commissaire de police*, and the next into a cell at La Force."

"You forget that I have the honour to belong to his Majesty's twenty-third regiment of the line!" replied Jules, with ineffable contempt. "Learn that I snap my fingers at your *commissaires* and your civil tribunals."

"By all accounts, you wouldn't be much better off before the Council of War, or at *l'Abbaye*," observed the *gamin*. "But forewarned is forearmed!—I hope I have set wolf-traps and spring-

guns between you and the cajolements of pretty Ma'mselle Aglaé!"

From that moment Jules accepted with more caution the smiles, eatables, and drinkables lavished upon him by the *soubrette*. His office, as deputy to Baptiste the *frotteur*, was to ensconse, every morning at daybreak, the well-waxed foot-brush with which the French dry rubber supersedes the long-handled scrubber in use in England, and, by a movement between skaiting and dancing the *tarantella*, conveys to the floors of the house a degree of polish worthy so polite a quarter of the town.

The first floor claimed precedence in his daily care; and next to Monsieur de Boncœur, Madame la Baronne de Gimbecque was to be attended to. But the Courson family, on pretext of the indisposition of Madame, declined the present service of the *frotteur*, and the single rooms of the single ladies and gentlemen constituted his sole remaining charge; Monsieur Georges choosing to keep down his carpets all the year round, in order to secure his mysterious sanctum against menial intrusion.

It was impossible to fancy a handsomer figure

than Jules, in his half military costume, with his crimson foraging-cap set jauntily on his head, and his open throat displaying a tremendous growth of *favoris*, balancing himself on his brush, and beguiling his labours by an inward murmuring of one of Bérenger's songs (such as the 'Vieux Caporal,' or 'La Grandmère,') not loud enough to infringe upon the slumbers of the Baron, Baroness, or whoever might be sleeping within reach of the apartment under the polishing foot of the *frotteur*.

Not a female in the house, from the lumbering housekeeper of Monsieur Boncœur to the aërial sylph of the back attic, but had taken occasion to compliment the porteress on the zeal, activity, and *bons-façons* of her son; eagerly assuring Madame Grégoire that there was not the least occasion for the infirm Baptiste to hasten his return from the hospital, previous to the expiration of the furlough granted to Monsieur Jules, of the twenty-third regiment of the line. At the expiration of three weeks' service, Jules had come to be regarded as a strictly confidential personage, having free egress and ingress to every apartment in the house. Not a drawer or cup-

board on either of the five stories but was left unlocked during his operations. The jewel-cases of Madame la Baronne de Gimbecque stood open on her toilet. Even the *sécrétaire*, containing her dainty cash-box of sandal-wood and steel, remained at his discretion.

At length, however, from the period when the advice of Guguste suggested to the young soldier the prudence of self-control, though the same confidence might be presumed to exist, since the jewel-box and cash-box still remained unclosed, the countenance and heart of Mademoiselle Aglaé grew less open. *His* caution rendered her guarded. She was surprised to find that so much insensibility could exist under a military jacket; and came in the sequel to regard him as of no greater accompt than the lump of bee's-wax which lay unmelting by his side. He ceased to be "Jules" in her estimation, and became merely the *frotteur*. Instead of feeding him with curaçoa and cake, she did not so much as note his comings or goings. He often went scrubbing on for a quarter of an hour, before she perceived that he was in the room.

It was in this way that the gallant Jules was

one morning shuffling along the *couloir* of the *entresol*, when he was struck by the audible whispering of female voices in Mademoiselle Aglaé's adjoining chamber, the door of which was ajar. The voices were those of the *soubrette* and the *ex-ouvreusē de loges;* the subject of discourse was a certain cachmere shawl which lay open on the table between them; which, as he skaited past, balanced upon his brush, attracted the notice of the young soldier as greatly resembling one which he had noticed on the shoulders of his angel—his fallen angel—of the attic story, the too charming Mademoiselle Isoline. The likeness alone sufficed to allure him back past the door for a second survey.

It was the same—the very shawl he knew!

He could swear to the bordering of palms and delicate green of the oriental tissue. At Algiers, thanks to his vogue among the fair ones of Araby the blest, he had become something of a connoisseur in shawls; and on that, or some other account, had taken especial note of the beauty of the one sported by the deputy-double of the general-utility *jeune prémière* of the *mansarde.*

The *frotteur* started!—Could the charming Mademoiselle Isoline be in pecuniary need?—

Was she reduced to the point of disposing of her personal apparel?—Had she selected the hag Madame Dondin as her emissary?—Cruel girl! to have denied *him* her confidence! Friendly as had been the fortnight of their intimacy, could she not have applied to *him* for aid—for counsel?—To resolve his misgivings, he shuffled back once more along the *couloir*.—It was clear that the refractory boards of the *parquet* demanded another assiduous five minutes from his strenuous foot!—

"If you would undertake to show the cachmere off to the best advantage to Madame la Baronne, and secure us a good bargain, the *bonne main* would be worth thinking of," insinuated Madame Dondin to the *soubrette* in a coaxing whisper.

"Do you suppose I have nothing better to do with my time than play the *revendeuse de toilette?*" cried the *soubrette*, examining the shawl askance with an air of disdain. "Do you take me, madam, for a *fripière?*"

"God forbid!" ejaculated the old woman (who was no better), with mock humility. "But as Mademoiselle well knows, in such matters as cachmeres, antique lace, or old-fashioned fans, not a

lady of quality in Paris, from the Tuileries downwards, but is forced to have recourse to second-hand goods. And as I said before, if Madame la Baronne *could* be tempted to give a round price for the shawl, the Russian princess, to whom it belongs, would allow a handsome *douceur* on the bargain."

"Russian princess!" muttered the *frotteur* at the door, on whom not a syllable was lost. "Then 'tis a clear case that I was in error about poor dear Ma'mselle Isoline." And he was about to recede from a scene in which he took no further interest, when a sudden inclination to steal behind the scenes of the *soubrette's* secrets, and ascertain the truth of Guguste's assertions, induced him to remain.

"The shawl was originally presented to her Excellency the princess," resumed Madame Dondin, "(but this must remain a profound secret between us!) by no less a personage than the late Emperor Alexander, who received it among other tributes from the King of Tibet, or Sultan of Persia, or Cacique of Madagascar, or some other Eastern Prince; and after his Imperial Majesty's death, her Excellency actually refused ten thou-

sand roubles for it from the English Ambassadress! But times are altered for more than one of us!" continued the *ex-ouvreuse*, with a pathetic sigh; "and the poor dear princess, having lost last night a considerable sum to another illustrious personage (who must be nameless) at *écarté*, which she is under the necessity of making up in the course of the day, entrusted me with the disposal of a few valuables, such as Oriental cachmeres, rough diamonds, and malachite vases. This cachmere is all that remains on my hands. Monsieur Rothschild took the rough diamonds at sight, and a rich Yankee jumped at the notion of malachite vases, which had once belonged to an emperor's mistress.—I have very little doubt that the Austrian Ambassadress, or Mademoiselle Mars, or some other of the distinguished ladies of whose houses I have the *entrée*, will be eager to secure this lovely cachmere (which, as you must perceive, is almost better than new). But still, as I *have* the advantage to lodge in the same house with a lady so distinguished for taste in matters of the toilet as Madame la Baronne de Gimbecque, and so fortunate

as to possess such an adviser, I felt it my duty to give her ladyship the preference."

"For my part, I consider a blue cachmere (or green—which is it?) *le comble des abominations!*" said Aglaé, shrugging her shoulders. "But should madame happen to be of a different way of thinking, what is the least price this Russian woman would condescend to take for her second-hand merchandize?"

"I think (between friends) that I may venture to hope to be able to promise," said Madame Dondin, in a mysterious whisper, "that she might be induced to accept so small a sum as eight thousand francs."

"*Elle n'est pas dégoutée!*" murmured Jules, who was leaning against the wall not very far from the door, an unsuspected witness of the bargain.

"Then you may just take her trash back to her again, or to the Russian Ambassadress, or to Ma'mselle Mars, and see if you can make greater fools of them than you have made of *me!*" cried the *soubrette*, bundling up the shawl, and flinging it into the arms of Madame Dondin. "I

would rather have a good Ternaux for five louis, than this old thing at *half* eight thousand francs."

"You did not say that you were making the bargain for yourself, or *that* might have made a difference in the price, my dear young lady," murmured the *ex-ouvreuse*, coaxingly.

"And who told you that I was making it for myself?"

"The princess is a reasonable woman," pursued Madame Dondin, without noticing the interruption. "Of course she cannot expect that your *petits profits* would enable you to make such liberal offers as we have a right to anticipate from Madame la Baronne. If, therefore——"

"In one word, take off your goods, and good morning," cried Mademoiselle Aglaé, affecting to wax impatient.

"If you could but guess the becomingness of pale green to such a complexion as yours!" cried the *fripière*. "To Madame la Baronne, indeed, I should scarcely venture to recommend so trying a colour!—But with a bloom pure and natural as that of mademoiselle, the most hazardous colours need not be apprehended. Permit me only to

throw the shawl one moment over your shoulders, that you may judge of the effect!—As Ma'me Grégoire's soldier-son said to me the other day, when we were following you from the porter's lodge up stairs, it is not everybody that can put on a shawl like the charming Mademoiselle Aglaé!"

"That anything that calls itself a woman should dare to utter such falsehoods!" muttered Jules from his ensconcement; while Mademoiselle Aglaé, on whose shoulders the shawl was now suspended in graceful drapery, paraded between two opposite looking-glasses, mincing her steps, and smiling herself into countenance.

"Charming—exquisite—divine—perfect!" ejaculated Madame Dondin, pausing between every word, while the *soubrette* perpetrated some new attitude to display to better advantage the rich border of the really beautiful shawl. "If some people, who shall be nameless, were here now, that lovely shawl would not long want a lovely wearer!——"

"*Un moment!*"—cried the waiting-maid, who had now fallen in love with herself and the green cachmere in combination. "Wait here five mi-

nutes, and I will give you a decisive answer about your old rag."—

"You are really going to show it to Madame la Baronne?—*Ah! ma bonne et chère demoiselle!*" exclaimed Madame D.

"Never mind to whom I am going to show it!" interrupted the *soubrette*. "Sit quietly down here. Say nothing to nobody, and if any one having a right to ask inquire your business, say you are my aunt from the country."

And away flew Mademoiselle Aglaé with the shawl on her shoulders; and so intent upon her errand, that she did not so much as notice the figure of Jules the *frotteur*, drawn up in a military attitude, behind the door leading to the little staircase appropriately named *escalier à vis*, leading from the *entresol* to the *escalier dégagé*, in common use to the Baroness de Gimbecque and her highly respectable neighbour of the first floor.

The motive which kept his Majesty's private of the twenty-third of the line loitering about the *couloir* for the ensuing twenty minutes, it would be very difficult to determine; inasmuch as every inch of floor had been rubbed and re-rubbed till it

was as smooth as the verses of La Martine; and if at leisure, his time would have been better bestowed at the breakfast-table of Madame Grégoire, who had promised her son a treat of *œufs au miroir* to qualify his daily ration of dry bread. But to the *entresol* did he obstinately adhere; and when, more than a quarter of an hour afterwards, Ma'mselle Aglaé glided cautiously down the back stairs again, Monsieur Jules followed on tiptoe to the door of the bargain-chamber, that he might ascertain the amount with which he was *im*-morally persuaded she came prepared to purchase the shawl.

"Madame is stirring, and will be calling for her chocolate in half a minute!" cried she, entering out of breath the presence of Madame Dondin, who sat swelling, toad-like, over the newspaper in a consequential elbow-chair. "I have therefore but one word to say. Here is a billet of a thousand francs, and another of five hundred. If the sum suffices to make up your good-for-nothing princess's play-debt, take it and leave the shawl; if not, take the shawl and leave it, and *bon voyage!*"

"Good morning, then," said Madame Dondin, coolly depositing the two bank-notes under a

bronze candlestick on the chimney-piece, and smiling with malicious delight at finding the game in her hands. "Her Excellency would dismiss me her presence if I took the liberty of approaching her with a paltry sum of fifteen hundred francs in my hand; when every soul in Paris, from the Porte St Antoine to the Porte Maillot, knows that a sea-green India shawl with a palm border, even if darned, even if with the fringe worn down to nothing, was never yet sold under one hundred louis. *Adieu, ma chère demoiselle!* I grieve to have been the means of losing so much of your valuable time; more particularly as I have to be with the ambassadress by eleven, and to meet the Maro afterwards, when she returns from rehearsal."

And coolly removing the cachmere from the shoulders of the *soubrette*, she began deliberately to fold it up, smoothing it at every fresh fold, as she might have done the cheek of a favourite child.

"There! *écorcheuse* that you are! Take the other note, and blush for your extortion!" cried Ma'mselle Aglaé, snatching from the bosom of her gown a second five hundred franc note, which

Madame Dondin, per force of some magnetic sympathy, conjectured from the first to have been extorted by the *soubrette* in pink ribbons from the man of *many* ribbons, many virtues, and many accesses to many back stairs. Then having received the shawl, thrust it hastily into a drawer, and turned the key upon her treasure, Mademoiselle Aglaé proceeded to thrust out the *ex-ouvreuse*. Madame la Baronne's bell was ringing for the second time; and Aglaé had no mind that Lindor, the pert page, should come and find her trafficking for *marchandises d'occasion* with a *fripière*.

Away went Madame Dondin to the completion of her errand; away went Mademoiselle Aglaé, with burning cheeks and incoherent utterance, to perform her morning duties at the toilet of her unsuspecting lady; while Monsieur Jules, in temporary occupation of the field of battle, perceived that nothing but the turning of a key in a lock divided him from the object of this tug of war, this memorable sea-green cachmere, which, when whiffing past him in the corridor on the shoulders of the *soubrette*, had exhibited to his astonished eyes a certain small ink-spot, miraculously familiar to his vision.

It happened that, one day, when occupied in his professional duties in the chamber of Mademoiselle Isoline, he had hazarded a request to that scholarly young lady, that she would commit to paper on his behalf a memorandum of divers cabriolets, bottles of blacking, errands, postages, and other items of no account, which in the sequel make a small account a large one, wherewith he had furnished her scapegrace neighbour of the attic story, Monsieur Ernest; and it was in the course of compiling the precious MS. that a drop of ink had, somehow or other, been transferred to Isoline's shawl, to efface which was, at the time, as much a matter of conscience to poor Jules, as Duncan's ghost-like spot of blood to that of Lady Macbeth. But the d. d. g. u. *jeune première* would not hear of sending her cachmere to the *dégraisseur* for the removal of the "damned spot;" and Jules had daily grieved over its superficial extent, till the length and breadth thereof became noted in his mind's eye, as the aspect of even the smallest of the planets may be noted in that of Mrs Somerville, or Sir J. Lubbock. Another glimpse of Mademoiselle Aglaé's recent purchase would suffice to determine whether it had not travelled

down three flights of stairs to its present destination; and whether the Russian princess of rough diamonds were not, like many other princesses, altogether fudge.

The temptation was a sore one. There could be no harm in turning a key to contemplate that which he had contemplated a minute before, and would probably have to contemplate a hundred times again. Yet still,—*a key!*—a key in a domestic deposit confided to the delicacy of persons entrusted with free entrance into a chamber. From the beginning of civilization, locks and keys have been esteemed sacred. Locks and keys are not to be trifled with! In all times and countries, locks and keys, like thrones and dominions, have maintained a right divine to our respect.

His Majesty's private of the twenty-third of the line hesitated. Well might he hesitate, and would that his hesitation had lasted till this present writing! But Jules had now advanced a step—a first step—the only "*pas qui coute*," in one of those back alleys described by Byron as

> The thousand paths that slope the way to crime.

He had been guilty of a dishonourable action, the sure precursor of a dishonest one. He had

listened at a door; there only remained for him to invade a lock!

Not but that the twenty-third of the line possessed, unfortunately, a code of morality of its own, excusing both the greater and the less transaction. The twenty-third of the line indulged in a favourite theory, that *tout est permis au profit des belles;* or, to translate for the benefit of the country gentlemen, that

> When a lady's in the case,
> All other mortal things give place.

Jules was convinced that he was serving the cause of Ma'mselle Isoline by ascertaining whether it was absolutely her shawl, and no other, which had been transferred to Ma'mselle Aglaé's chest of drawers in consideration of two thousand francs, lawful coin of the realm; and all moral obligations consequently vanished from his mind. Madame Dondin was gone, Mademoiselle Aglaé engaged; he glanced stealthily round the deserted room, glided to the fatal drawer, turned the key in the hateful ward, drew forth the detestable shawl, ascertained beyond a doubt that the "spot" was *on* the spot, replaced it cautiously among the spotless lawn, cambric, and calico of the

soubrette; and was about to reclose the drawer when, with flashing eyes, and burning cheeks, Aglaé—the indignant Aglaé—stood beside him!

"*A la bonne heure!*" cried she, in thundering accents. "This is the way, is it, that our property is secured during our absence? Subjected to the prying of a dirty, pitiful, spying, eavesdropping fellow, who begins with picking, and will end with stealing, or rather, whose picking and stealing will end at Brest or Toulon! Ay, ay! I see you from here, Monsieur Jules, marching off from Bicêtre with a chain of *forçats*, and wearing pretty nearly the same hang-dog look, which sits so well upon you at this moment!"

Jules felt that his case was desperate. He had done wrong, and he stood detected. To appeal to the mercy or generosity of Ma'mselle Aglaé, with an avowal of his repentance, would be much the same as to prostrate his soul at the feet of the bronze Apollo gracing the clock on her chimney-piece; he therefore adopted an Irishman's philosophy, and attempted to brazen it out.

"Be not angry, fairest of creatures!" said he, attempting cavalierly to seize her hand; "I had the happiness to be in the *couloir* just now, and to

see that shawl thrown over your shoulders for the first time, as you returned from a visit to the honourable deputy up stairs (who, *par parenthèse*, is not visible to *everybody* at this early hour of the morning!)—knowing the unprincipled covetousness of Goody Dondin, I trembled lest the lovely Aglaé should have been made a victim in her bargain with the old jade; and being, from my Arabian experience, something of a judge of shawls, could not resist my inclination to have a peep at this. Had you been here, I should have entreated your permission; had you been here, I am convinced you would have granted it. Moderate, therefore, your indignation. My care for your interests led me into an error; let not your indifference to mine betray you into too severely resenting it."

Mademoiselle Aglaé was by this time satisfied, at least, that the gallant *frotteur* had insinuated himself too far into her secrets for her to indulge, without imprudence, in the exposure she had meditated. It would not do to alarm the house and cry "stop thief!" when Jules was so well able to retaliate. She contented herself, therefore, for the present, with calling him an impertinent

fellow; bidding him avoid both her presence and her room, which seemed more inviting to him than her company; threatening for the future to lock her drawers, and to keep her keys as charily as St Peter; all this time secretly determining to have her revenge the first moment it was to be had without danger to herself.

Rejoiced to escape at so easy a rate, poor Jules now proceeded, with a crest grievously fallen, to take his share in the *œufs au miroir* provided for him by his loving mother. He was conscious that he had done a shabby thing. Even for Isoline's sake, he had no business to go prying into secrets under lock and key. Nor was he even able to obtain the reward of his frailty. Mademoiselle Isoline's door was closed, and he had not so much as repaid himself by her thanks for his still-to-be-expiated fault. But Jules concluded her to be, where she ought to have been, at rehearsal; and almost despaired of seeing her again till he took his nightly stand that evening in an obscure corner of the pit, to greet with all the force of his lungs and palms her exits and entrances in her bran new part of 'Inez de Castro.'

Little did he conjecture that poor Isoline, after

counting over the four hundred and eighty francs given to her by Madame Dondin as the price of her shawl (deducting the twenty which she protested she was obliged to bestow as job-money on the *femme de chambre* of the Russian princess by whom it was purchased), and tendering to the *ex-ouvreuse*, as *her* sale-fee, the double napoleon she had brought in gold, as if to point out the amount of her personal expectations,—was assisting Mademoiselle Claire in her attendance upon the unfortunate Madame Courson. Jules, who knew and appreciated the Good-Samaritanism of the back-attic, would have been little surprised at the discovery. Still, it would have cut him to the soul to know how grateful the poor destitute girl was to Madame Dondin for the four hundred and forty francs transferred to her strong-box, and how wholly unsuspicious of the fifteen hundred and sixty realized by the vile old woman in the iniquitous transaction.

The heart of the poor actress was in fact dancing within her for joy to think that, by the sacrifice of a luxury, she was insuring the necessaries of life to two suffering fellow-creatures of her own sex. Claire de Courson's tears of gratitude poured

down like rain when she saw the influx of nourishing food and comfortable fuel which, with Guguste's assistance, was transferred to her mother's apartment in the course of the day. Already, small quantities of strong broth and old Malaga had done wonders in reviving the exhausted frame of the invalid, who was now resting comfortably in a room swept and garnished with a cheerful fire and a cheerful face awaiting her awaking.

But indulgence in these toils and pleasures had made fearful inroads upon the duties of the deputy-double! Never had she found study so difficult, retention so impossible. The verbose prose she was to imbibe passed through her brains like tepid water through a sieve;

> But, like affection's dream,
> It left no trace behind!

The day waned; the murmur of the streets diminished; the time was come for repairing to her post,—for putting up the wooden barriers, erected on the nights of new pieces at the doors of the Parisian theatres, with a view of lessening the pressure of the throng,—for opening the doors,—for appearing full-dressed in the green-room, in expectation of the prompter's call;—and Made-

moiselle Isoline *was* at her post, and almost as dull as a post. Her tongue was in her head, and her rouge upon her cheek, her part in her hand,—but *not*, alas! in her head, *not* in her heart, *not* on her tongue! Instead of speaking her speech "trippingly," according to the advice of Hamlet, there was every probability that she would be unable to halt through half a dozen sentences. Her companions looked exulting—the stage-manager black as midnight, or as Peter the Cruel; for something in Mademoiselle Isoline's conscious, yet downcast looks, assured them that all was up with 'Inez de Castro.'

It is believed in the French provinces that every theatre in Paris contains a box called the author's box, or *la loge matelassée*, lined and cushioned with wool, to enable the author of a falling piece to dash his head against the sides during the process of damnation, without danger of fracture to his skull. Had such a retreat existed in the obscure theatre of the Boulevards, to which the moderate talents of poor Isoline were pledged at an equally moderate salary, the unhappy Corneille of 'Inez de Castro' would have done wisely to repair to it during the very first scene of

his very first act. From the moment of her appearance, his heroine was evidently as bewildered in her wits as Ophelia or Tilburina! It was in vain that Jules from the uproarious *parterre*, or Guguste from the upper *paradis*, which kept whistling* as though the souls of its blest were so many bullfinches, attempted to overpower with their applause the murmurs of the malcontents. No one could say that a cabal was formed against either the piece or actress. The house was unanimous, with the exception of the single *gamin* and solitary footsoldier, who persisted in swearing that the one was equal to Racine, and the other superior to Madame Dorval. *Ils avaient beau dire!* — the public would not sit out poor Isoline's stammerings. The curtain fell amid a general clamour; and as it happened (ominously enough) of all the nights in the week to be Friday, Mademoiselle Isoline was acquainted by the manager, on her return to her dressing-room, that her salary would be at her disposal on the following morning for the last time,—"the theatre having no further occasion for the services of a deputy-double to its

* On the Continent whistling is substituted for hissing in the condemnation of a play.

much-esteemed *jeune-prémière* Mademoiselle Eglantine, who had arrived that night from her engagement at Dijon, in an Auxerre passage-boat, to delight the public, and redeem the theatre from its disgrace." Isoline was, in short, ignominiously dismissed the company.

Let those who can conjecture the feelings of the mighty Napoleon during the last half-hour of the Battle of Waterloo, or the troubled faculties of the still more illustrious Sir Walter when perusing the criticisms of Ballantine the printer on the last volume of 'Count Robert of Paris,' conjecture the anguish of spirit of the poor actress, whose bread was not only taken from her, but who had adopted the support of others whose bread must now become as scanty as her own! It was not wounded self-love which caused her ears to tingle, and her cheeks to become blanched beneath their coating of rouge, while she listened to the contemptuous shouts of the fastidious audience; it was mercy nipped in the bud, like a snow-drop withered by a still bitterer blast than its usual bitter atmosphere. She could have found it in her heart to weep, but that the eyes of many a sneering rival were upon her humiliation!

As she passed onwards through the dark, damp, dirty passage, where, by the light of a lantern, the tender-hearted Jules waited for her with her cloak and clogs, she ran against a person whom, on looking up, she recognised, by his *coëffure à la moyen age*, and cravatless throat, as the luckless author of the piece whose fortunes her carelessness had marred.

"Monsieur Ferdinand," said she, stopping short, and blushing at the tremulous sound of her own voice, "may I take the liberty of asking what sum you expected to receive from the theatre for the copyright of your play?"

"Ten louis, madame!" cried he, scarcely able to articulate for rage,—"ten louis; which you may be said to have abstracted from my pocket, to say nothing of the injury permanently inflicted on my reputation!"

"Would to Heaven it were in my power to repair either injury!" replied the poor girl in a humble tone. "Consider me at least your debtor for one-half the sum of money. You may remember," added she, with a faint smile, "that I advised you from the first not to entrust me with your verses. I now recommend you not to trust

me in your debt. Do me the favour to call upon me to-morrow morning for the amount."

"No wonder she played so badly to-night!" cried a knot of walking ladies by whom this apostrophe was overheard. "Ma'mselle Isoline is clearly overflowing with louis-d'ors. Ma'mselle Isoline has found a rich and generous friend."

And their envy pursued the discarded deputy-double, as, leaning on the charitable arm of Jules, she took her melancholy way towards home: the home which her new duties rendered doubly precious and doubly painful. The private of the twenty-third of the line said not a word during their plashy trudge homewards under a thrice-soaked, reeking cotton umbrella. He felt that the moment was too critical to trouble her with inquiries after an object so trivial as the sale of a cachmere shawl.

On their arrival at home a scene of unusual confusion presented itself in the House of Five Stories! A domiciliary visit from the police to the lodgings of the Chevalier St Georges, of whom, ever since his adventure at Bagnères, they had been in search, was bringing to light a series of remarkable discoveries!—

Monsieur le Baron de Boncœur having judged it necessary to assist, to the utmost in his power, the investigation instituted by his esteemed friend, Monsieur le Prefet de Police, had taken upon himself, during the absence of the "particular" landlord, the dignities and duties of "*principal locataire*," and insisted that the inquiry should take place in his apartment; where the production of the registry of the lodgers, and the verification of their passports, would afford a certain clue to the identity of the swindler, said to be lodged under the same roof with his own impeccable virtue. When, lo! a discordance became instantly perceptible between the signature of Madame Emilie de Courson and a passport assigning the name of "Bercy" to herself and her daughter!

The examination was public; that is, as public as became a grand apartment of the first floor, inhabited by a Monsieur le Baron. Mademoiselle Aglaé on the part of Madame la Baronne de Gimbecque, Madame Grégoire, on the part of the particular landlord, took their places as witnesses; while poor Claire, who stood there as representative of her sick mother, trembled at the harsh interrogatories of the *Chef*

de Police. But even her emotion was nothing compared with that which rendered the cheeks of the noble *Marguillier* of the parish as pale as ashes. That Claude de Bercy, the successful vaudevillist and successful adorer of his fair neighbour of the *entresol*, was the son of his wilder youth, a fatal memento of his less respectable career, he was only too unsatisfactorily aware; but that the mother from whom he had withdrawn the boy in infancy, to be alienated from her for ever by an education enabling him to make his way in the world, was still living,—living in poverty, and so near him,—that the grey-eyed beauty, in short, to whom he had dispatched the apricot marmalade, was their daughter and the sister of Claude, was a fact he had as little conjectured as poor Madame de Courson that the rich Baron of the first floor was the Bourdeaux banker who, by tearing her infant son from her arms, had compelled the change of name by which she hoped to evade his rights upon her girl.

Gladly would the agitated Baron have made his escape before the poor terrified invalid was forced to answer in person the interrogatories of the police; for already, he anticipated the recog-

nition that shortly followed; the agonised cry of the unfortunate woman betrayed into his presence after an estrangement of sixteen years; and the explanations which gradually brought to the knowledge of Mademoiselle Aglaé, and consequently of Madame la Baronne, the fact of his paternal claims upon the author of Sophie de Melcour.

It was just as Ma'mselle Isoline and her military escort were passing the open door of Monsieur le Baron's apartment, round which were clustered the emissaries of the police holding the little shivering form of Monsieur Georges in close custody, that the shrieks of poor Claire de Courson over the fainting form of her mother, irresistibly impelled her to enter and lend her aid to those to whom she had already afforded such christianly assistance.

Her presence was all that was wanting to complete the confusion of the moment! The indiscreet frankness with which (after Madame Courson and her daughter had been withdrawn, at the suggestion of the Baron, into an inner apartment to recover themselves, while he answered for their respectability with the full weight of his own,) poor Jules proceeded to draw the attention of Ma'mselle

Isoline to her own shawl upon the shoulders of the *soubrette*, and explain upon what terms it had been transferred thither by Madame Dondin, attracted the attention of the *Agens de Police*. Nor was the matter amended when, at their professional suggestion of the unlikelihood that so large a sum as two thousand francs should have been paid by a waiting woman for an article of wearing apparel, Mademoiselle Aglaé, in her indignation at having her word suspected, ventured to cite Monsieur le Baron de Boncœur, then and there present, as her guarantee that she had been really defrauded to so large an amount.

Three delinquents were consequently brought to light by an investigation purporting only the conviction of one.—The *ex-ouvreuse de loges* was arrested as a practiser of fraudulent practices;—Monsieur Victor Berazzani (*dit Georges*) arrested as a professional swindler; but Monsieur le Baron de Boncœur was also saluted with a low bow and peculiar expression of countenance by the *Chef de Police* while thanking him for his aid in unmasking the guilty doers. It was not of course among the duties of the *Prefet de Police* to examine into the motives of so worthy a man for feeding

the hungry and clothing the naked, by presenting cachmeres to pretty *soubrettes*, or apricot marmalade to others still more unfortunately in his power. But the glance was not without its effect. The impostor knew himself to be found out; and that the sooner the scandal was crushed in the bud the better, by establishing Claire and her mother on an honourable footing, and securing his unacknowledged daughter from attentions on the part of others as insidious as those hazarded by himself.—

Such was the origin of the opulence which enabled the grateful mother and daughter to shower benefits upon the poor discarded actress, as allowed her to dispense with a calling for which she was ill fitted by nature; and Mademoiselle Isoline is now labouring, by honest industry, to acquire the *dot* with which she hopes at some future time to bestow her hand on Monsieur Jules, so soon as his period of service shall have expired in the twenty-third of the line.

Madame Grégoire, however, is indignant at the notion of such an alliance in her family!—*Her* daughter, if the wife of a showman and shaver of poodles, is at least within the pale of Christian law; while Isoline, as an actress, is under sentence

of excommunication, and incapable of receiving Christian wedlock or Christian burial at the hands of the priest!—

Nevertheless, the pride of Madame Grégoire is on many accounts less ferocious than formerly. The respectability she was once so fond of asserting on the part of her landlord, has undergone grievous disgraces in the eyes of the neighbourhood. A swindler, a *chevalier d'industrie*, is proved to have been harboured for years under that "particular" roof, and though she took immediate revenge upon the poor victim who was supposed to have afforded information to the police, by turning Guguste out of doors, and interdicting all further communication between him and her grandson Dodo, the honourable position to which the boy was soon afterwards promoted in the new household of Madame and Mademoiselle de Bercy, has served to prove that the denunciations of the portress are not fatal. Her only solace, meanwhile, consists in the trebled stipend by which the ever-respectable Baron has seen fit to purchase her silence,—and the trebly deferential curtseys addressed to her *en passant* by his prudent *femme de ménage*.

Moreover, the second and third stories have been placarded as "To be Let" ever since the removal of Monsieur Georges to St Pélagie, and of the best of daughters to her mother's cheerful new residence at Passy.—The back attic of the fifth floor is also vacant;—and if, as it is surmised, Madame la Baronne de Gimbecque should be tempted to become the wife of the fortunate Claude, whom she has shamed her respectable neighbour, the Baron, into owning as his son, it is probable that the *entresol* will be found too closely adjacent to the apartments of the Baron to form a desirable residence.

Sad work all this for the "particular" landlord!—unless, indeed, the public should make him amends by seeing fit to take into its capricious favour the "House of Five Stories."

THE END.

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